PROHIBITION AND CHRISTIANITY

JOHN ERSKINE

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PROHIBITION AND CHRISTIANITY

And Other Paradoxes of the American Spirit

BY JOHN ERSKINE

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BY

JOHN ERSKINE

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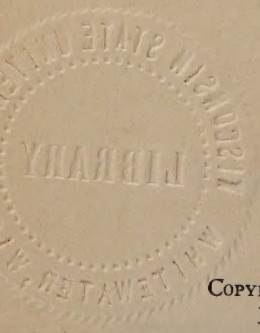

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G. LANSING HURD

NOTE

Some of the chapters in this book have already appeared in the *North American Review*, the *New York Nation*, the *Amherst Graduate Quarterly*, the *New York World*, the *Century Magazine*, the *Bookman*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Herald Tribune Sunday Magazine*, and the *Youth's Companion*. The chapter on "American Character" and that on "French Ideals and American" are from a volume now out of print, *Democracy and Ideals*.

I have tried to define some of the problems and aspects of American character to-day. I have no wish to lecture my fellow countryman, and I do not presume to offer final solutions. I have merely set down my own meditations in varying moods on this complicated life of ours, out of which we believe a coherent national character will in time emerge.

Since my own preoccupations are with art, I have perhaps emphasized unconsciously those interests which I should like to see more fully developed in the American consciousness. I write especially for those who agree with me that our concern is not with prosperity or comfort, but with the mind and the spirit.

JOHN ERSKINE

G. LANSING HURD

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PROHIBITION AND CHRISTIANITY

Prohibition and Christianity

And Other Paradoxes of the American Spirit

I

PROHIBITION AND CHRISTIANITY

A FRIEND of mine, a devout Presbyterian, is also a zealous prohibitionist. I have been telling him that to be a Presbyterian and a prohibitionist at the same time is to lead a double life. He is amiably amused but undisturbed. I have tried to rouse him by explaining that of course a Presbyterian is supposed to be a Christian, and that prohibition is incompatible with Christianity—unless what has gone under that name has strangely altered. My friend, being a practical man, replies that prohibition has come to stay, and that Christianity will stay, too; they both will stay, as it were, arm in arm; and for evidence he reminds me that this or that religious convention has heartily endorsed the dry-laws, and has prayed that similar regulations may soon be enacted for the whole world.

In the face of his spiritual complacency I lay hands on what little theology I possess; I ask him whether

prohibition does not go against the doctrine and example of Christ, as the gospels until recently were interpreted; whether it does not discredit the wisdom of Jesus for all who have believed in Him either as the Son of God or as the Son of Man; whether it does not undermine the doctrine of the Eucharist; whether it does not contradict the phrases children are still asked to learn from the authorized catechisms. I ask, as a kind of blanket question, whether the Eighteenth Amendment is an amendment to the Constitution or to the New Testament.

The fact that my questions do not ruffle him in the slightest, and that his ability to digest the paradox is shared by other Christians who believe in prohibition, makes me ask myself whether some deep change has not taken place in the American definition of Christianity.

Such a change would be of concern even to those who have no connection with a Christian church, and who subscribe to no part of the Christian theology; it would be an historic fact of the first importance. Arguing with my friend, I urged the ideas which once would have been valid; he, at least, ought to have respected them, even though he thought me a libertarian. But he seemed to respect them less than I did, and he left with me the suspicion, which has since grown on me, that for this country, at least in the Protestant churches, traditional Christianity has come to an end. Something else is in its place—a philosophy which can insist on the literal interpretation of the scriptures, and

at the same time on the enforcement of laws which contradict that interpretation. One wonders what, in the long run, will be the moral effect of such intellectual stultification.

Of course, what is here said applies only to those who take their Bible and their church seriously. The agnostic, the atheist and the pagan have the advantage, if they wish it, of being able to endorse prohibition without an inner conflict of their supposed ideals.

To a non-Christian it would of course be irrelevant to recite the sacred part that wine played in the life of Christ. But the professed Christian will tell you that the public life of his Master began at a wedding, where he turned water into wine—into particularly good wine; and the night before the crucifixion is remembered for the supper of bread and wine. This Last Supper concerns the professed Christian; in fact, his religion is based on it. If he has fought bitter wars over the precise way in which the bread and wine should be administered or received, at least it was bread and wine he fought over; never until now has he questioned the authority of his tradition. In between the wedding at Cana and the Last Supper, Christ consorted, as the prohibitionists of His day complained, with wine-bibbers and drunkards. Some ingenious enthusiasts tell us now that our text is corrupt, and that what is called wine in the New Testament was something else, much closer to the innocence imposed upon us to-day. The argument is not convincing, but in any case it is immaterial. Though the

wine that Christ drank were as weak as water, yet there were prohibitionists at hand then, as now, to tell Him not to drink it. By His practise He showed that He did not believe in prohibition, not even when it was sincere; and by His words He implied that prohibition and humbug are not necessarily dissociated. He said, in effect, that the type of person who goes in for prohibition is hard to understand; they called John the Baptist eccentric because he ate no bread and drank no wine, yet when Christ came, who did eat bread and did drink wine, they called Him gluttonous, a wine-bibber, the companion of sinners.

Christians have spent centuries of energy in disciplining those who could not confess that Christ was the Son of God; the bitterness with which a Trinitarian attacks a Unitarian is still lively. The issue between them is still the faith supposed to be held by the orthodox, that Jesus taught as one having authority, and not as merely the wisest of men. Observing how many professed Trinitarians are ardent for prohibition, we are impelled to ask whether Christ still speaks to the orthodox with authority, or whether in the light of later knowledge they feel in position to set Him right; whether He ought to have turned that water into wine —or whether the orthodox do not believe He did it, after all; whether He should have consecrated wine as an element in the great sacrament—or whether He failed to say grape-juice only because He had not yet heard of it. These questions will perhaps offend the taste of the orthodox prohibitionist. They ought to

challenge his faith as well, but only his taste seems to be sensitive.

Indeed, more than one of us is compelled to believe that the endorsement of prohibition by professed Christians would be impossible if their faith were still warm in the heart or clear in the head, and that it has come now only because that faith is dead. It departed so quietly that we did not miss it until, happening to contradict it, we felt no discomfort. The ministers still read out in the churches that Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples, with the bread and wine of the ancient sacrifice. And as they ate, He "took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is my blood." Has any one yet suggested that this famous passage should be suppressed?

But if the orthodox object to the wine as improper, as a temptation and a snare, they are taking the ground that Christ did not say these words, or that He had no authority to say them. They are giving up, logically if unconsciously, any further concern with the mythical or metaphysical aspects of His nature, or with that inner sustenance of which the bread and wine were to be outward or visible signs. It looks as though prohibition might have a simplifying effect upon Christianity; perhaps nothing will remain of it but an ecclesiastical system or a body of ethical doctrine for such as still revere the life spent in Galilee. But to suppose

such consequences of prohibition is probably to get the cart before the horse. The faith in Christ, the vital use of the sacrament, must have been abandoned before prohibition could be supported. As the matter stands to-day, you can not persuade a prohibitionist, any more than an atheist, by citing the authority of Christ in the Sacrament. We recall such authority merely in the spirit of the historian, to observe to what extent its empire has disappeared.

2

Whatever else may have been abandoned in Christianity, one might expect at least its peculiar moral system to remain. Many who do not worship Christ as God, at least pretend to follow Him as an ethical teacher. Has not prohibition, then, something to do with the Christian virtues, with temperance in particular? Nothing at all. In fact, the prohibition laws now on our statute books or attached to our Constitution, are contradictory to the Christian doctrine of temperance—the virtue of self-control in conditions of freedom. To the early church, as to the ancient world, there could be no credit for virtue nor blame for vice, if the virtue or the vice were compulsory. To lead a moral life was to follow one's self a career of free choices, the extremes of which were Heaven and Hell, and to safeguard for others also a career of free choices, even as the Creator allowed us to choose between good and evil, in order that we might be moral. God gave us the liberty to forsake him. Our first

parents, we are told, "being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created"; as a consequence they and all men, their children, have found it easier to choose the evil than to choose the good; when we are freed from this bondage of sin, we acquire a greater facility in choosing the good, and in a state of glory we may enjoy an immutable freedom to choose good alone. But at every stage of the moral career there must be choice, not compulsion.

It is not easy to advocate this old ideal of temperance, as a virtue rather than a police regulation, for the prohibitionists have a quick retort ready, that he who would permit the opportunity to get drunk must be an advocate of drunkenness. They speak as though the moral system which Aristotle gave the world and which Christendom has taught until now, never recognized how awful drunkenness is; sometimes they seem to suggest that only in modern times have we discovered the social implications of that beastly vice, and that both Greek and Christian wisdom would have forbidden all intoxicating liquors if only Aristotle and Christ had realized how bad they were. But drunkenness has never been more thoroughly condemned or more successfully combatted than when the ideal of freedom with self-control has been sincerely followed; and with good reason, for a morality based on responsible choice must contemplate with peculiar horror a condition in which the mind surrenders its sovereignty, and the man is no longer responsible for himself. The

viciousness of prohibition lies precisely in its resemblance to drunkenness, in that it also takes away the sovereignty of the mind and deprives character of moral responsibility. The Aristotelian Greek and the early Christian had no praise for prohibition nor for drunkenness—nor yet for gluttony, which our Constitution still permits and which many a teetotaler practises. Just how many Americans, if left to their own devices, would drink themselves to death, it would be hard to conjecture, but it is unbelievable that they would equal the number of those who, unrebuked by the church and warned in vain by the family physician, are eating themselves into their graves. More than one famous prohibitionist has passed away ingloriously on the parlor sofa, after a too hearty dinner. The excesses of the trough, whether in meat or in drink, are ancient sins against the mind and the soul, and Christian as well as Greek teaching, classing them always together, urged as a remedy against them the virtue of temperance.

Even in those days, however, there were philosophers whom the fear of sin impelled to a kind of absconding from the whole moral problem. Wine might be misused; perhaps it should be prohibited. Plato in his later years seems to have inclined to prohibition on this ground; he had played more than most Greeks with the fascinating idea of making some one else good by force. Aristotle brought back the hope of social morality to the nobler ground of reason. Of course wine offers the temptation to excess; so does any other

food. Dancing is dangerous; so is the theater; so is all pleasure; so is every profession; so is life itself. Shall we avoid the peril by removing the possibility of choosing either right or wrong? The Orient has tried that remedy for ages, and Europe experimented with it in various forms of the cloistered existence. But the central tradition of the church followed Aristotle, and generously acknowledged the pagan philosopher as among the forerunners of the Christian doctors. Every virtue, he had said, is produced or destroyed by practise; by practise the harp-player becomes a good harp-player—or a bad one. So by drinking a man becomes a drunkard or he becomes temperate; but if he does not drink, or does not eat, or takes no other pleasures of body or mind, or does not live at all, he can not claim virtue of temperance.

"Be not *drunk* with wine," says the apostle. It is the excess that is sin. Christ found himself heralded by a fanatic, by a member of a sect who would not taste of the grape in any form, nor eat meat or ordinary food. In so far as he heralded the Master the Baptist was a burning and a shining light—but on the question of prohibition? "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; . . . The Son of man is come eating and drinking."

3

These simple arguments which remain to me from the old-fashioned ethics I was taught in my youth, might perhaps be confuted by a profounder philoso-

pher than I. But it is of interest, I submit again, that those who believe in prohibition do not much care whether such arguments are answered or not. Not long ago I expressed this point of view to a group of clergymen met for serious discussion. I said that prohibition was prohibiting not liquor but morality; that the world it sought to bring about was one in which we could neither do wrong nor be good—in their terms, could neither go to Hell nor achieve Heaven; that temperance, formerly one of the four great virtues, had been abolished as a virtue and nothing had been put in its place; and that as a consequence the wise counsels to that virtue, whether in the Hebrew or Christian scriptures or in the classical books, were rendered meaningless.

One of my hearers, a clergyman of distinction in his community, rebuked me in courteous but firm terms for what he seemed to consider an extravagant train of thought. He asked whether I would not admit that even in Aristotelian times and in Christian thought there had always been a limit to that freedom which is necessary for a moral choice; whether there had not always been a tendency to remove from the field of choice anything that had been proved beyond question harmful; whether we did not take away from people such poisons as opium; and whether we should not logically prohibit liquor, now that science had proved it harmful? I replied that I did not believe science had proved beer and wine nor even alcohol to be harmful in the sense that opium is—so harmful that there

could be no career for temperance in the use of them. But since he evidently believed that liquor was in the same category of viciousness as opium, I asked him whether he celebrated the communion with wine. He said he did. I asked him how he came to put opium in the chalice and give it to his people. He seemed to think me somewhat obtuse, and replied with patience that the law prohibiting liquor made an exception of wine used for medical or sacramental purposes. I asked him on what ground he approved of that exception or was willing to profit by it, but my questions had ceased to interest him.

An older clergyman interrupted to say that I was rather off the track in my whole argument; that the main thing was to put an end to drunkenness, which was the curse of many a family, and that since prohibition would automatically end drunkenness, we needn't worry about the confusion it might present to a theorist in ethics. The argument in that direction was called off, but I have often imagined these two gentlemen of a Sunday morning, mounting their pulpits to say that the grape is evil, and coming down again without embarrassment to offer the chalice to the perplexed congregation, with the familiar words of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me."

It did not seem profitable to suggest to that audience one other criticism of prohibition—they would have brushed it aside, I fear, as merely speculative. But in all contrivances for enforcing virtue there is the question as to who is qualified to do the enforcing,

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and the longer the experiment is made the more difficult it is to see where those reliable supermen are to come from. If a child finds a sharp knife, we elders do indeed deprive it of the moral freedom to cut itself; we take the knife away. If the clergyman had been logical, and had taken the opium out of the chalice, he would have been acting as an elder parent toward his childlike congregation. He would have acted for them in the freedom they could not enjoy, and he would have developed his moral character by an habitual series of such choices, not of course permitted to them. But when the first generation of moral elders passed away, who out of the hand-led children would have the training to take charge of the rest? This question seems to me not speculative but practical. When the present generation of prohibition officers who now regulate the sobriety of the country depart to their rest, which of us will be fit to take their places?

But passing over this more remote question, I did ask my clerical friends whether, if the Church is determined to support prohibition, it might not be discreet—one would almost say honest—to bring the teaching of the Church into harmony with the new position. The children are still learning their catechisms, and presumably they are still storing their memories with the same devout praise of wine that I learned when a boy. If the Church is now for prohibition, why not revise the catechism? At this point the audience looked grieved; perhaps they suspected me of flippancy. I hastened to illustrate. "What is the out-

ward part or sign in the Lord's Supper?" asks the catechism. The answer is, "Bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received." Shall we teach that doctrine in a parish where prohibition is endorsed? A strictly honest account in some places would be, "Bread, which the Lord hath commanded, and grape-juice, in the light of better information." In other strongholds of prohibition where wine is nevertheless used in the chalice, the version, if completely honest, would be, "Bread, and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received. Christ did not know as much as we do about wine. But there are still so many voters who think He knew more than we do, that if we had insisted on prohibiting wine in the sacrament we could not have put the Amendment through."

There is another question and answer in the catechism which even more urgently needs revision, if the Church is to endorse prohibition, for it teaches that wine is in itself wholesome and beneficent. The question asks, what are the benefits whereof we are partakers in the Lord's Supper. The answer is, "The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are (refreshed) by the Bread and Wine." The last clause should read, "as our bodies are refreshed by the Bread and not by the Wine."

I quote these illustrations from the catechism of the Anglican Church because it is brief and explicit, but other catechisms offer the same problems for the

prohibiting Christian. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith reads: "The Lord Jesus Christ hath, in this ordinance, appointed His ministers to declare His word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine," etc. Again, in the Larger Catechism, Question 169: *"How hath Christ appointed bread and wine to be given and received in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?"* Answer: "Christ hath appointed the ministers of the Word, in the administration of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to set apart the bread and wine from common use by the word of institution, thanksgiving and prayer: to take and break the bread, and to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants, who are by the same appointment to eat the bread and to drink the wine." One might quote also from the Heidelberg Catechism, but this will do. I have my Presbyterian friend in mind.

4

Those who fear that before Christianity could endorse prohibition it must have forgotten its own message to the world, have in mind also more subtle parts of that message than can be quoted from gospels or catechisms. Like other religions, Christianity accepted and consecrated to its own truth whatever it found deep-rooted and wholesome in the human spirit. The faith that had its first revelation in the meager welcome at Bethlehem and achieved its highest sacrament at the supper in Jerusalem, gathered up into its

ritual the human sentiment of hospitality. To share food—that is, to share life—has been in all stages of history a mysterious and universal impulse. It is easiest to understand in primitive or frontier conditions, where existence is precarious and where none but a brute would withhold life from another; yet even in sophisticated societies where there is no question of hunger, the impulse to share food persists with increased authority, and with an attendant obligation to live in fellowship rather than in enmity with those who eat your salt or break bread with you.

When a man enters your house and finds you eating or drinking, the earliest of your ancestors in you offers him of what you have. This impulse applies only to meat and drink; if you are reading when he comes in, you feel no obligation to tell him what you have read or to give him the book. And this impulse of hospitality, rearticulated and reconsecrated in the Eucharist, has had power for centuries even upon those who were not Christian; for however Christians have belied the doctrine by their practise, the teaching of Christ was that mankind are of one blood—none to be set off as Gentiles, in the Jewish way, nor as barbarians, in the Greek way, but all to be brothers, as the poet or the democrat, unconsciously Christian, thinks of them. This is perhaps the one message of Christianity that has taken hold of the world. It states what many had felt, but what no other religion had emphasized; and notwithstanding the bigotry and the persecuting spirit of Christian bodies, this is the gospel of Bethlehem.

It is also the meaning of the sacrament in that upper room. The Eucharist, the feast of Thanksgiving, was to be a communion of mankind, wherein the bread and the wine were to be shared with the old sacredness of food and fellowship, and spiritually all men were to find a common profit in the body and blood of Christ's sacrifice. It would be hard to measure the depth of reverence which men, simply as men, feel for any sacrament of hospitality; even the skeptic admits what chords are struck in a humane heart by the great Christian rite. One would have thought it late in the world's day to take from us the bread and wine.

The wine, be it noted—not beer or strong spirits or any more elaborately fabricated drink. Prohibition is against all liquor, but it collides with Christianity especially in the matter of wine, for the instinct of hospitality, long before the time of Christ, had begun to single out wine from other beverages as the proper element in its sacrament. The bread of the Passover was to be unleavened, and the drink that hospitality offers was to be equally pure—the natural product of the grape, born of the soil, the sun and the seasons, fermented by its own nature and matured by the patience of time. So simple is the miracle, so close to the mystery of life itself, that wine has always suggested a god within it, a god whose blood it is, a Dionysus.

But perhaps only those who have lived near the vineyard understand this miracle of the wine, as perhaps only those who live near the wheat-field know what bread is. I think of an old woman, now passing

her last days on her ancestral farm in Burgundy, who showed me, one memorable evening, the little vineyard that yielded wine for her forefathers and still produces what her household needs, and the modest wheat-field that for generations has answered their prayers for daily bread. With the turn of the seasons Madame Gauthey follows every step of the process by which the spear grows at last into the loaf, and on her own acres she sees every moment of the sequence from the starting of sap in the cane to the wine in the bottle. Under her eyes these two miracles have enacted themselves each year of her long life, and her chief reflection upon them is that nature has much to do with their quality, and man little; they are God's gift. When she goes to the village church the sacrament appeals to more than a religious docility in her; her piety is of her experience and of her emotions, and from a thousand memories of sunshine and toil, of fireside and old faces, she knows what bread is, and what is wine. I think she is in the way of understanding Christianity. Prohibition would seem to her impious, if it were not preposterous. But she understands better than many of us the beautiful metaphors—"I am the Bread of Life," "I am the true Vine."

THE PROHIBITION TANGLE

II

THE PROHIBITION TANGLE

1

"PROHIBITION is here," we are told, "and it is here to stay." It is time we considered frankly just what, under the name of prohibition, is here, and whether this is what is going to stay. Even the prohibitionist ought to aid in the inquiry, for unless the cause he believes in has really triumphed, he is on the way to something worse than failure; he will become an object of ridicule and perhaps an unconscious help and comfort to the enemies, not of prohibition, but of temperance.

It is always an error for the leaders in a moral cause to claim a victory before they get it. Leaders in a moral cause shouldn't tell fibs, and besides, their followers may find them out. If prohibition were here, drinking would be on the decline. We are told that drunkenness is on the decline, but no one makes any rash statements about drinking. The decline in drunkenness is the result of temperance, and it had begun and got well under way before the Constitution was amended. If it is true, as they say, that the country has remained temperate in a state of so-called prohibition, we can well be proud of the essential morality

of our people. If prohibition were really here, there ought to be some law of the land which forbids drinking hard liquor. There is none at present; the country as a whole has never said that drinking is wrong, and has never forbidden it. If prohibition were really here, and by the will of the people, we should not be told that the fight has only just begun, and that more money is needed by prohibition societies to convert people to the cause.

Some Americans sincerely believe in prohibition; others of us do not believe in it at all. But so large a majority of us believe in temperance and realize the social as well as the moral peril in drunkenness, that we ought to be able to scrutinize our present condition frankly and in good faith. Most of us will agree that the law should be respected; however we joke about it, the bootlegger or the smuggler is not popular here. Yet with all respect for law—even just because of our desire that the law shall be respected—we may hold that a given law is a bad one, bad for the purpose it is intended to serve, whether we agree with that purpose or not. If we had a prohibition law which represented the will of the people, which frankly forbade the thing it was intended to stop, then prohibition would be here, and perhaps here to stay, and we who still prefer the Christian virtue of temperance to the Mohammedan discipline of prohibition, should be voted down, relegated to the past with a good many other vestiges of Christian civilization. We should be good sports and accept with what grace we might the

passing of a civilization we loved. But at least we ought to know, for our comfort, that another civilization had arrived to take its place, that those who voted us down had now the satisfaction of trying out their new ideals; at least we ought not to be asked to give up a freedom we believe in for something the other side does not believe in either. When a prohibitionist tells us that prohibition is here, we know that he is not content with what is here. When he says it is here to stay, we know that he hopes a condition very different will arrive to take its place. Some of us believe that the condition he hopes for can not come under the laws he has got enacted, and we wonder how long it will be before he will re-examine the prohibition law, not as a concession to us but in the interest of his own cause.

The prohibitionists have explained that the law as it now stands and the present system of enforcement are the result of compromise, the sort of compromise any wise man makes who wants to get something accomplished in this contentious world. "Doing the sane, practical and successful thing" has brought criticism on them, they admit, but they believe that the majority of the people approve this plan. In the same spirit many anti-prohibitionists hope to effect a practical compromise by defining "intoxicating liquors" so liberally that without repealing the amendment they may drink what they like. I have little sympathy with either compromise. The prohibition laws as they stand have had already profound effect on the na-

tional attitude toward laws in general, even though they have not yet affected the supply of liquor; they have started us off on a singular attitude toward the rights and privileges of other nations, which may lead us no one knows where; and anything that touches our life so deeply is worth being honest about. The most charitable judgment we can make of ourselves now is that we are confused; our wisest course would be to start again from the beginning and say—both sides say—just what we mean. At present I can say that the country never voted prohibition, and you can retort that the country voted the present amendment, and we both remain right, since the amendment does not forbid drinking, and was not intended to produce a condition in which drinking should altogether cease.

When we suggest that the whole question be reopened, the prohibitionist hastens to assure us that it is practically impossible to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. It is the amendment, it seems, that has come to stay. The prohibitionist, to say the least, shows no great confidence that the country would follow him if the thing were to do over again. But in time he will agree with us that his law as it now stands does him injustice, misrepresents his ideals and encourages those so disposed to misjudge his motives. The amendment forbids the "manufacture, sale or transportation," of intoxicating liquors, but says nothing about buying or drinking them. The courts might hold that if the seller is guilty the buyer is also, in the intention of the law; but in practise we observe, in the

prosecutions reported in the press, that the government moves according to the letter of the law, against the provider of liquor, not against the consumer. Moreover, Congress made it clear in subsequent legislation that the possession of liquor is quite legal, provided the liquor was acquired before the amendment went into effect. Those who had the means and the disposition to do so, could therefore lay in stock enough for a lifetime of moderate drinking, but those who lacked the money or the foresight would have difficulty now in getting a bottle of whisky or gin for household medical purposes, unless they are willing to encourage the bootlegger. It is a serious part of the whole tangle, therefore, that the present law made it easy for the rich man to supply himself legally with liquor, and very hard for the poor man. The prohibitionist explains the situation by pleading that without this understanding in favor of the well-to-do and provident, the amendment could not have been passed, and he adds that when this generation is gone there will remain little of the legally acquired stock, and from then on the rich and the poor will be on equal terms. From present indications I doubt whether rich or poor will lack a drink if they want it, and the unchangeable amendment will always permit us to drink if any one will sell us the liquor; but meanwhile the present generation knows that the poorer citizens have been put in a false position so far as the law is concerned, and the conviction grows in the land that the amendment owes its existence in part at least to the

desire of the competitive employer to get more work out of his men.

In France during the Armistice I heard some French statesmen twit a high official in our government about American prohibition then threatening; they told him that Puritans ought to know how honorable a part wine plays in the Bible, in the Jewish Passover, in the Christian Eucharist. He replied that for him prohibition was not primarily a moral question but an economic one—the United States wanted a larger product out of its working class. I have not forgotten the astonished silence that fell on the Frenchmen. There has been for some time a strong temperance movement in France, but this other thing, apparently, they had not met before. One of the Frenchmen asked the American statesman which of our political parties was going to break the good news to our working men. Remembering this enlightening scene, I have observed since that when a manufacturer has a name for quantity production, for that economy of process which takes the craftsmanship out of labor and reduces the workers to a monotony of repetition, that manufacturer usually believes in prohibition. In fairness I must add that in some cases he abstains from liquor himself, not because the law prevents him from drinking, but because he has a sense of fair play, and perhaps wishes to set a good example to his men. We all know, however, the manufacturer who will explain to you the advantage of prohibition for the

country, while sharing with you his private and perfectly legal stock.

If we were interested simply in opposing prohibition, without any concern in the general happiness of our people, we might very well accept this grotesque situation with equanimity, for the supply of liquor among the rich does not diminish as the prohibitionist said it would, the intention to discriminate against the workers is more obvious, and a class resentment grows which will some day deal with the question in its own fashion. But meanwhile much more than prohibition is being undermined; we have enough class resentments already, and the end of law and order, the end of that ideal often professed by the prohibitionists, is in sight when legislation and its enforcement are bent to the advantage of a class. The prohibitionist says that any questioning, any repeal, of his laws is a blow at the heart of government itself. But there must be prohibitionists also who know that a cause however good will be harmed by a bad law, by a law that weighs unequally on the various sections of society; they will agree with us that in a democracy a law which favors the rich is doomed. They may come to feel uneasy, as we do, when some eminent jurist or body of jurists admonishes us to obey the Eighteenth Amendment in the interest of law and order. They may come to mutter with us, "Dear Wardens of our Justice, of what complexion is this virtue of yours? Do you mean that we should drink nothing? Or that we should have had a

foresight perhaps like your own, whereby we might now be gladdening our hearts within the law?"

Whether or not the prohibitionist is ready as yet to reconsider the amendment, there are plenty of signs that he is badly worried by the blunders made in the provisions for enforcing the law. Any one with half an eye could see what would happen unless the prohibition agents were men of the most reliable character. Some betrayal of the cause there was sure to be, since human nature is sometimes weak and the temptations would always be strong, but in justice to themselves the prohibitionists should have done their best to secure honest enforcement. The constant exposures of corruption among the prohibition agents is not the worst blot on the record, nor the tiresome shifting of the blame between federal and state authorities; the indelible blot on the prohibition record is the attitude toward Civil Service. When prohibition was before Congress it was proposed to put the enforcement under Civil Service. The proposal came from a "wet," and the prohibitionists regarded it as an unfriendly act, since the amendment could not be passed with this guarantee of honest enforcement. The facts have frequently been aired, and they are clearly admitted, with all the implications, in an exchange of letters which *The Outlook* printed, October 24, 1923, between William Dudley Foulke, of the Civil Service League, and Wayne B. Wheeler, General Counsel and Legislative Superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League of America. Mr. Foulke, if I am correctly informed, is not opposed

to prohibition, and Mr. Wheeler makes it clear in his letter that he personally believes the agents should be in the Civil Service; the letters are therefore all the more significant as coming from men who do not, as I do, see in the amendment the root of the whole trouble. This is Mr. Foulke's account of the compromise in Congress:

> When the Volstead Act (for which they were responsible) was up for consideration, they made not the slightest protest against the infamous clause which excepted all the field places in the enforcement bureau from the classified service. They secured the passage of the law with this clause in it, and thereby made all these places the spoils of congressmen, many of whom unscrupulously secured the appointment of scoundrels who accepted bribes, dishonored the service and made the enforcement bureau what President Harding himself called it, "a national scandal."

In other words, the sponsors for prohibition, those who now tell us that prohibition is here to stay, accepted a compromise which hamstrung their law, in order to get the law on the statute books. As the scandal of "enforcement" goes merrily on its way, the Anti-Saloon League has a standing invitation from every good citizen, prohibitionist or otherwise, to answer two questions: "Was it impossible to get your measure through Congress with the safeguard of Civil Service? If it was possible, why didn't you insist on it, why didn't you at least ask for it?"

Mr. Wheeler's comment on the notorious compromise is as good as could be made by a spokesman for

the Anti-Saloon League who personally agrees with Mr. Foulke about Civil Service:

As the legislative representative of the League, I have been in favor of putting these agents under Civil Service. Practically all of the Anti-Saloon League leaders favor it. The National Prohibition Act puts the clerks and assistants under Civil Service, but *it was impossible to place all agents, inspectors and clerks under Civil Service when the act was adopted.*

I italicize the significant sentence. The inference is inevitable that Mr. Wheeler for one does not think the people through their representatives spoke out unmistakably for prohibition, and he has no higher opinion than Mr. Foulke of what has been going on under the prohibition that is "here":

Under the present system, prohibition agents are chosen, in most places, because of their political qualifications rather than their fitness for the position. When protests are filed and the dominant party leaders from the State insist upon the appointment of an agent, he is practically always appointed, regardless of his lack of qualifications. When the United States senators of a dominant party and the party leaders are friendly to law enforcement, we secure, as a rule, good agents. When they are hostile, inefficient or corrupt agents are chosen. When bad agents are in the service and protests are filed against them, although the Department is convinced of their unfitness political leaders have on many occasions required the Department to keep them in the service.

Mr. Wheeler does not say what power it is that the political leaders wield over the Department, but it is easy enough to guess; the kind of prohibition we

suffer under is the result of a deal, in which the prohibitionists won a phantom victory at the price of political spoils; and to keep up the pretense of victory prohibition must continue to pay the disgraceful price. An obvious remedy, even now, would be to start over again and put the agents under Civil Service, and this is what both Mr. Foulke and Mr. Wheeler urge. But will the prohibitionists take this obvious way out? Indeed, can they, after their previous compromise? What makes both Mr. Foulke and Mr. Wheeler a bit distrustful is that the prohibitionists have already proposed to put the agents under Civil Service, but on condition that the agents now in service be accepted without examination! Mr. Foulke tells of this episode with some warmth:

> For a long time the advocates of the merit system could secure no co-operation from the leaders of the Anti-Saloon League in any measure of reform. When the Republican administration came into power Commissioner Haynes and the League reorganized the bureau, but wholly along political lines, Republican rascals being substituted for Democratic rascals; and it was only within the last year or so that, overcome by the ghastly conditions around them, they were willing to classify it at all, and then their scheme was to cover into the service the variegated assortment of criminals who had been appointed as spoils, a measure which would only lead to the perpetuation of the evils which the spoils system had inaugurated! The leaders of the Anti-Saloon League do not seem to realize that their own methods are disreputable in just the same way as those of the saloon-keepers whom they denounce.

To this episode Mr. Wheeler does not refer di-

rectly, but it seems to be in his mind when he speaks of the possibility of adopting the Civil Service clause for prohibition agents in the next Congress:

> The chief controversy that will arise when this measure comes up in the next session of Congress is whether all enforcement officers shall be placed under Civil Service, including state directors, or whether certain executive officers shall be excluded, as is done in other departments of the Government under Civil Service. *It will also be contended that agents in office should be exempt from the examination.* I believe that it will be better to require all of the agents to take the examination.

2

With such confusion in the law itself, and with conditions so deplorable in the enforcement of it, it is worse than unfortunate that the amendment and the Volstead Act are the illustrations when we are urged to respect the law. The growing disrespect for law is the most serious menace to our society. Unjust laws should be resisted; I have no disposition to censure the colonists who opposed the Stamp Act; yet there is little hope for a society which takes all laws lightly, even those it is supposed to disapprove of, and much as I dislike the principle of prohibition, I should rather have a genuine prohibition law for the country, and have it enforced and obeyed, than watch the spread of the present contempt for all law. Yet having said so much, I must add that in my opinion no intelligent citizen could or should respect the pro-

hibition laws as they are at present enunciated and enforced. Obey them, yes, but not respect them.

If I personally am disturbed by this phase of the question, it is because my life-work is with students, with the younger generation, with a new younger generation each year, and having a high regard for their brains and for their character, I would not myself do anything, if I could help it, nor would I have my own generation do anything to make us seem in the eyes of the young stupid or insincere. We are told sometimes that there is a serious gulf between the younger generation and their elders. Even though they can not state the grounds of the difference, the youngsters complain of it. But if their elders think the trouble is all with the young, with their free ways, their disregard of time-honored conventions, their inexplicable lack of respect for us, it is salutary to remember that youth explains the difference as a triumph of that very intelligence and character we hoped to bequeath to them. We have educated them too well for them to respect our present goings-on. They know too much of the past to believe that our methods for securing temperance will succeed, and when we tell them that prohibition is here, they generally think us senile, to avoid having to think us liars. Many opponents of prohibition have told us that because of it the evil of drink is spreading among young men and women, but I question whether this is true, of the country as a whole. Our young people have learned the wisdom of temperance, partly through a whole-

some interest in sport and consequently in training, partly through an interest in social problems and consequently through some knowledge of the harm drunkenness does, and chiefly perhaps through wise teaching about the proper use of alcohol, such teaching as was imparted in many schools before prohibition promised to make temperance unnecessary.

As far as temperance is concerned, the standards of the young folks are probably higher just now than those of their elders; they have been trained to some ideas of hygiene as their elders were not, and never having acquired the habit of the steak-pancake-pie kind of breakfast, and never having shared in the intoxication of the old-fashioned New Year calls which the word "liquor" calls up to their reformed elders, they find it sensible neither to eat nor to drink too much. They could be counted on in any crusade for temperance. But the prohibition régime leaves them cold, a little amused, at heart I think profoundly puzzled, for they know enough of history to recognize that the prohibitionist is trying to do what from the experience of earlier men would seem impossible, and what the great moralists of western civilization have condemned. Our young people hear many appeals to return to the ways of the fathers, to keep the old pieties and to honor the old institutions, but they have good reason to suspect it is the elders who have departed from the tradition—who perhaps are not entirely informed as to what the tradition is.

To me this has become the most serious aspect of the prohibition tangle. The teacher who reveres the wisdom of the past and would hand it on to the younger generation is now in the unpleasant position of furnishing ammunition to the young against their elders, and the students watch this drama of the old folk with sharp eyes to see whether the teacher will let them come at the real doctrine of the past, even though it condemns such a program as prohibition, or whether he will try to disguise and trim the record to harmonize with the present performance. Whatever else he may learn from such inquiry, the student is not likely to become more docile when the authority of the past is cited. At the best he will use his intelligence to find out which faction of his conflicting elders he prefers to follow—Washington, Hamilton and Jefferson, let us say, or Mr. Bryan, Mr. Ford and Mr. Anderson. If he honestly follows the moral and political ideals of the first group, he must expect hard words from disciples of the second; his conservativeness will make him appear in their eyes inflammatory and dangerous.

And how can the teacher help him without taking sides and increasing his dilemma? If the student is encouraged to read the Bible or the words of the great Christian leaders, he will find prohibition condemned, as inconsistent with the cardinal virtue of temperance; yet he knows that the most conspicuous prohibition advocates have an extraordinary faith in the authority

of the Bible, even holding to the literal inspiration of everything in it, and he knows also that many of the churches are now making prohibition as it were a chief article of their creed. If he studies the American Constitution he learns that the amendments were added to curb the government and to secure the private rights of the individual citizen; if he reads Tom Paine or Jefferson or Franklin or Hamilton or Washington, he learns that the great experiment of this democracy was by way of protest against paternalism even for our good, against all despotism even when benevolent; and this in the interest of human nature, that there might be a land where character grows with self-respect and responsibility. Those rights of the individual which could be exercised best in common, like the right to protection, were to become the duties of government, but government could not take those rights away from the individual; the Constitution was amended, for example, to secure to the citizen the right to bear arms.

Those matters in which individual rights can not be delegated—food, drink, clothing, religion—were to remain outside the scope of government, since the public servant who fights for us and conducts our domestic and foreign business for us is forever unable to eat or drink for us, or to believe in God for us. When he begins to fancy he can think for us, he needs looking to. When government develops the habit of such usurpations of private right, it is the right of citizens, "it is their duty, to throw off such government, and

to provide new guards for their future security." This counsel to revolution at the proper time, will be read by the student in the Declaration of Independence. He will note—with what emotions we can only guess—that the prohibitionists frequently appeal for loyalty to the Constitution; and though they do not urge us to read it, they could have no objection to our doing so, or to our reading the Declaration as well, and when we do read it, we discover it is they who have altered its first purpose and contradicted its spirit. They can reply, of course, in the argument of any wise liberal, that documents like the Constitution must adapt themselves to changing conditions; but to reverse the meaning of the document, to turn from the ideal of constitutional liberty to the ideal of benevolent paternalism, is something more than adaptation.

That the younger generation are aware of this confusion is clear in their chance remarks. "They don't believe in Socialism," said one of my students, "but they love to practise it, provided they are in power. You remember, Professor, the time we were asked to save gasoline on Sunday during the war? Just asked—and every one stopped riding on Sunday. Rather a fine kind of morality, wasn't it! If drink is doing the country harm, why didn't they ask us to give up drink, in the same way? Of course some people would not give it up, but most would—many more than have given it up under prohibition, and public opinion would have been against the drinkers. Now they say we mustn't drink, whether we want to or

not, and they tell us we can't drink—which isn't true—and they tax the country heavily to stop drinking, and then they have the nerve to beg us as good citizens to help them out by not drinking. Why didn't they ask that in the first place, and save the fuss and expense?" Or as another student remarked, "They say we should cultivate respect for the prohibition law because they fixed it so it can't be repealed. Queer reason for respecting a law!"

I would not give the impression that these remarks and their like are made by students primarily as an attack on prohibition; they come to my ears almost invariably as illustrations of the assininity of the elder generation. The young people, as I said, are disposed on the whole to back up a genuine and self-respecting program of temperance; nothing could be easier than to enlist them in warfare against drunkenness. They do not see, however, why so good an object should have been confused with stupid arguments, incomplete or insincere statements, and costly and questionable methods. They look at the matter from the outside, as something not their affair, as one more instance of our genius for conducting the world's business the wrong way, and they speak of it chiefly in frank moments when they are moved to confide in us, as youth will, their opinion of the funny figure we are cutting. The ideal of temperance is heroic and noble; youth can admire sacrifice for the good of others, and can see the moral beauty of moderation, of self-control, of abstinence for the sake of a fine end. The practise

of temperance leaves the mark of beauty on the temperate. But prohibition, the passion for preventing other people from doing what they like, is essentially a mean passion, and devotion to it has never yet developed attractive or lovable character. The occasional pronouncements of the prohibition leaders to-day are frequently lacking, to say the least, in sweetness and light. Insolence toward the public, vituperation toward the critics of prohibition, are the manners of the cause, and though the younger generation is said to be rather free in its etiquette, it still judges a man and his philosophy by his conduct. With this spectacle before it of prohibition advocated in the most intemperate terms, of prohibition leaders resisting the order of the courts to give an account of the moneys they have collected from the public, of naval forces chasing bottles up and down the coast, of enforcement officers indicted from time to time for an improper interest in the bottles—with this vision of Cockayne spread before it, youth is ready to agree with the prohibitionists that the theory of evolution is unconvincing. "Virtue in her shape how lovely!" Man has not evolved. Not yet.

3

One phase of the tangle has been too little noticed or discussed in the United States. Prohibition is ardently supported by many who are avowed pacifists, and who on ordinary occasions lose no opportunity to plead for disarmament. I use the word "pacifist"

in its more recent sense, to describe one type only of the lover of peace. Any man in his senses would do what he could to avoid wars, and from that point of view we are all pacifists. Any competent officer in army or navy would exercise the last degree of patience in the hope of avoiding a cause of war, or of postponing the beginning of hostilities. The prohibiting pacifist, however, makes no bones about forcing his wishes on other nations, and he will risk any amount of hostility in order to have his way. In his mind, it appears, armies and navies are not necessary for the defense of our homes or our liberties, but they should be used and if possible increased to prevent bottles of beer from entering the country. I do not wish to defend the smuggler any more than the bootlegger; it is not a glorious chapter in British naval history that so much liquor, as we are told, is smuggled here under the British flag. But it should be remembered that in dictating to foreign peoples as to the spirits they might or might not bring into our ports, even under seal, we did all we could to offend proud nations with longer traditions of the sea than ours, and with a record for law and order which we have not begun to equal. England and France would blush to confess to so many murders and robberies in a year as we must own to in the United States each month—allowing for the difference in the size of the population. It was hardly becoming for us, at this moment of world history, to take so keen an interest in the morals of our great neighbors. The British

smuggler knows that prohibition "is here to stay, and by the will of the people," and he also knows that the people will pay a high price for all the liquor he can bring in. If we like to import liquor that way, at so much inconvenience to ourselves, what business is it of his?

What we will not have, however, no, not if it costs any amount of argument, is the bringing in of liquor on foreign ships for the use of the foreign crews. Any one could see that in the land of Cockayne that is where the line would be drawn. Unless, of course, the foreign ship belongs to a country that is smuggling liquor into our ports. In that case we agree by treaty to allow liquor in our harbors under seal, in return for the right to search ships of that flag beyond the three-mile limit. We once fought a war with England because she wanted to search our ships, but she was looking for her own citizens, whereas we are looking for some one else's whisky. A captious person might say that we are penalizing those countries which do not smuggle liquor; since we have no interest in searching their ships, their crews must go without their accustomed wine. But the fine points of the paradox are as nothing compared with the single plain impression we are making on the rest of the world—the impression of bumptious pride, of disregard for the views of our neighbors, of conceit in our own virtue, and of ignorance of the nature of virtue and of manners alike.

I confess it is difficult to foresee how we shall

mend our ways; the danger is that we shall do as we please about drinking, and the amendment will function only in the directions that will embarrass us. The ideal thing to do would be to begin again, intelligently and sincerely, and, having found out just what the people want to see enforced, frame a law that would cover that desire precisely. The amendment is too vague, and it does not forbid drinking. If drinking is not wrong, we shall never feel that the manufacture of drink is wrong. If it is the saloons that should be abolished, let the law abolish the saloons. If we condemn whisky but want wine and beer, let the law say so. And since there are people of varied habits in different sections of the country, let us allow for the differences in some form of local option. Such a program could be carried out honestly, and if the people were consulted at each step, we should have a law of which public opinion approved, and which therefore could be enforced.

But the wisest thing we could do is outside of legislation; we could return to the noble doctrine of temperance, the doctrine of the great Greeks, of the great Hebrews, of the saints of the Middle Ages, of the founders of this country. The moderation of our elder patriots was partly at least urged upon them by the hardships of pioneer life; we need the virtue of temperance more than they, since life heaps opportunities upon us to be prodigal and wasteful. The virtue of temperance would protect us from the evils of liquor, and from how much besides! Surely we

need not have a separate prohibition for each sin, when one central morality could deliver us from them all! I could wish that the moralists in my generation might develop more love for virtue and less curiosity to hunt down vice, for we might then improve our relations with the young. To youth a positive virtue is attractive, as something chivalrous; the true warfaring Christian suggests sword and helmet and a blooded charger. Prohibition suggests nothing better than defensive prudence, a dread that something may happen to us, umbrella and rubbers.

AMERICAN CHARACTER

III

AMERICAN CHARACTER

1

At some time or other we all boast of the country to which we belong. The American is said to be extremely boastful. To understand him, however, it is well to observe that he boasts of his country, not of his race, and that he is quite aware of the difference between the man who has a country and the man who belongs to a race, and that he believes the difference is in his favor. He knows better than to think of Americans as derived from a common stock, and he prefers not to think of them as conserving their virtues from their fathers. When he boasts of what his fellow-citizens are, or what they can do, he would express his faith that in origin they are but common men, but that being Americans they have had advantages. The raw material of the American character, he believes, is not the refinement of one blood nor the blend of many races, but the plain substance of human nature; and this raw material, he would say, is brought to perfection by a happy way of life, which usually he does not define beyond his conviction that there is in it much hope, many dreams, and little of the past. Twenty years ago, perhaps, this generalization would

not have been true; perhaps it will not hold for to-morrow; but if you would understand the Americans of the moment, the soldiers who made their appearance in the last act of the war, the citizen army in France and the citizen workers at home who suddenly, almost convulsively, realized themselves as a nation, you must begin by noting that they did not realize themselves as a race.

You must begin with this fact because there the American begins to differ from the Englishman, and let me add, from the German. In his *Address to the Americans,* Mr. Chesterton made a striking contrast between the American national ideal and the German. Germans, he said in effect, are all of one race but of many ranks; Americans are of many races, but wish to be of one rank. He was obviously opposing to that hope of democracy which human nature very generally entertains to-day, that other conception of one peculiar race, God-favored, against which human nature has very recently had to arm itself. But if we were to change Mr. Chesterton's contrast so that it should carry no flavor of condemnation but simply a statement of the difference between neighbors, the Americans would consider it proper to say that the English are of one race; that they prize the traditions which can come only with race consciousness; that they think better of the English-born simply because he is born of English blood; that the typical American, if he were an Englishman—that is, if he had a race tradition—would naturally set a high value upon it,

and would think favorably of a new acquaintance who could introduce himself as of the same inheritance; but that the American, having come from all races, makes it a point of honor not to ask a newcomer of what race he is—makes it a point of honor to keep to himself, if he has it, or to suppress as far as possible, the sentiment for traditional things—for the family line, for the inherited language, even for the home in the sense of a fixed hearth.

The reason for this American renunciation of race might seem to be primarily what is suggested in Mr. Chesterton's contrast, that we in the United States have come from the ends of the earth, and that in order to live together at all we are obliged to slip lightly over matters of origin, which form our chief divergence. Certainly there is some truth in this explanation. But it was not an American who first spoke of the United States as a "melting-pot," and to one who knows the country the phrase is not a true description. If it were, the race would begin after the melting is done. Such an enforced compromise as characterizes any society recruited from varied sources is but a temporary expedient, and if there were no other reason why Americans think of themselves merely as a country or nation, never as a race, we might expect this explanation to become invalid with time; we might expect that at least the children of those who so compromise would consider their way of life at last settled and traditional, and their ideals as beginning to be racial. It does not appear, however, that any traditions are growing in

the United States, nor does the promise of any show itself even at this moment when the idea of nationality has become with us, as with other people, a living force.

The truth is, that if Americans were to let their minds dwell on their personal or family history, upon the places in which their family life began, our whole country would be aching with homesickness. The end of most philosophies is to enable men to live happily with the facts that particularly affect them. We have evolved a philosophy which enables us to live cheerfully with the great American fact that all of us have left the house, and most of us the city, where we were born. This is obviously true of the immigrant; it is equally true of the New Englanders who have moved west, of the southerners who have moved north, and of the westerners who have come to eastern cities. The American man or woman who at the age of thirty is still living in the house in which he or she was born is hard indeed to find. The average soldier in the French army during the war might easily have come from a family hearth which had burned continuously for a hundred or a hundred and fifty years. Of the American army probably no more than two or three per cent. were living at the time of their enlistment in the home of their birth. Their families had come recently from Europe or else they had moved about in the United States. The causes of this moving are interesting, but not for the moment important; the important thing is that when an American thinks

of his country he does not think of the soil, nor of the homestead, nor of his inherited language, for to do so would be to cultivate retrospect and regret; rather he thinks of the ideals for which his country stands, of the future, of that world of affections in which he instinctively recognizes a career for himself and a common meeting-place with his fellows.

Is the American, then, an idealist? He certainly is so in the sense that he lives in the world of prospects and hopes. Therefore he is willing to rebuild his cities with that incessant tearing up of streets and remodeling of houses which to the European is a nightmare orgy of change. If he has a vision of any improvement which could be made in his boyhood home, and if he can find the means, the house is probably doomed. Only a few churches in America, and no other buildings, may be warranted safe against this passion for bringing the world up to date. Colleges and universities in the United States perhaps conserve more pious memories than any other kind of public institution, yet some of our large universities have transported themselves bodily to a new site, with the result that the alumni who return to venerate Alma Mater must thereafter do so strictly in the world of imagination, paying homage to an idea, since there remains on the campus neither stick nor stone with power to recall a single minute of their youth. In these removals the motive is a true idealism, an imagining of the university in a large and eternal world, together with the will to realize the dream; the ac-

complishment, however, is perhaps a bit troubling, since a shrine abandoned will send its own petitions after the departing worshipers.

The American habit of living in a world of prospects and hopes is still more troubling in an individual who happens to be provincial in culture. Not only will he seem lacking in the humane tradition, as indeed he will be lacking in it, but he will seem perhaps contemptuous of it to a degree that shocks or annoys the European. Of Americanism in this phase Dickens gave a portrait—of the apparently boastful, exaggerating, shallow Americanism. Perhaps Dickens failed to understand the great effort by which citizens of the United States resolve not to think tenderly of the things they or their fathers have put behind them. Americans of British descent have loved Dickens for his portrait of the English life from which they have gone out; yet even such Americans will rarely permit themselves to speak of Englishmen as their British cousins and never of England as their home. So the Italians in the States, or the immigrants of any other nationality, are careful not to speak of their Italian sky or of the other particular heaven of their boyhood as though they still had a place under it; such memories they cut off, more or less, in order to share without reserve in the enterprise of the new world. Of course, since we elect to live in the future, we give the impression of a tendency to boast, but when we speak of the future we are discoursing upon the only part of our history which we all have in common. We

are merely expressing with energy the dreams and the hopes which are the fabric of our present moment, and at times we are merely whistling for courage to walk on with so little guidance from the customs and habits of our fathers.

It took courage to pull up by the roots a family in Denmark or in Italy or in Serbia, let us say, and to transplant it to a new world. Such a family settling in central Massachusetts, for example, must repeat several times the equivalent of the first uprooting; since even though the family itself does not move, its neighbors will, and the Irish settler will be succeeded by the Polish until each original family is once more isolated among people of other backgrounds. Or if the family simply remains, the new generation will surround it with new traits. Many a novel is written on this theme in the United States to-day—stories of the Americanization of this family or that, where the Americanization consists largely of breaking away from the elder generation and becoming proportionately optimistic. The change is usually effected by education; it is no wonder that the small schoolhouse is so often a shrine of gratitude—often a gratitude mingled with melancholy, for here the culture of the past has been used, not to recover the past, but to get free of it. To the foreigner, no matter how friendly, our harping upon a brilliant future is perhaps, as we said, a form of boastfulness, but to the American it seems rather a form of prayer, a telling of beads, and we can hear in it, as in American music, a wistful note;

we are conscious of caring too much about the future and too little about the past; we should like to know at any moment whether the frail structure of our dreams is settling down to some contact with some foundation, and whether we are at least walking on our own feet on the ground.

Our seeming optimism is most blatant when our culture is most defective, but even when the American is at home in the older world he will prize it chiefly for its usefulness to him and his fellows, for bringing their dreams to earth. The crowds of Americans who toured Europe in the years before the war had little antiquarian or historic interest in what they saw. They looked upon European architecture only as seeing what they might use at home; if the Coliseum reappeared in the Yale bowl, and the Gothic cathedrals were freshly translated into the Woolworth building, then those ancient monuments justified themselves. The Old World belonged to them, they thought—Westminster Abbey, for illustration, was to them as much American as English. We did not build it; but then, neither did the present inhabitants of London. The people who built it are dead. The Abbey is the possession of those who revere it. The same point of view is the secret of Longfellow's charm for his countrymen, and perhaps for other readers as well. When he translated, or even when he gave his original self, he was conveying home for the American the usable parts of European literature. Here best is found an explanation of his currency even among those writers abroad who recognized how much he had copied from

their national poetry; for, accommodating the poems to the American people, he had substituted in them for the enjoyment of history the American wistfulness, and this substitution gave him originality with the European reader. If we were to seek another example of the discrimination the American temperament makes even when it can appreciate the older culture, we might point to the contrast between our present neglect of Greek language and literature and our present great interest in Greek dancing. With us Greek language and literature have long been taught chiefly if not entirely as vehicles of a tradition. Even if we learned to read Greek, we saw no opportunity for doing anything with that difficult accomplishment. Greek dancing, however, gave us an opportunity to dance. You may say if you choose that neither Athenian nor Spartan nor Theban ever danced as does the American who imitates the Greeks; the average American, however, is by preference without archæological conscience, and for him the choice is easy between the way he likes to dance and the way the Greeks may be thought to have liked to do so.

To say that even the cultured American is interested in culture only for what it will avail him tomorrow, that he does not permit himself the retrospects of history; to say that the average American uproots himself from the place of his birth and of his boyhood, that he crushes down all race memories and boasts only of his future—to say this is, of course, to exaggerate. In certain parts of the United States, in Virginia and Massachusetts for example, pride of

race and pride of the hearth does from time to time become eloquent in the old families. Even those of us who were not born in those states enjoy and encourage such eloquence as being a somewhat quaint exhibition of our national imagination; but at the same time our instinctive answer to this tendency is to make fun of it. Boston is indeed a city of culture, but since Boston is aware of the fact, its culture is for other Americans a theme of good-natured jest. This defense against an incipient pride of locality or pride of ancestry is not new with us; we have always made it. Irving wrote his *History of Dietrich Knickerbocker* as comment upon a serious history of the Dutch settlers in New York. Similarly David Gamut in Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans,* and Ichabod Crane in Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow,* are notable caricatures of the school-teacher who already was becoming a boasted type in New England. What we might think of heredity, were we an older society, we do not know; at present, however, we are inclined to judge a man by his future—by the record his son is likely to make rather than by the record his father made. This is quite literally true; in small villages and in cities alike the son of a distinguished father is fatally handicapped if he shows any disposition to remember whose son he is, whereas the creditable performance of a rising young man leads the neighbors to observe that he must have been well brought up. We might add that if the American lacks reverence for his elders, he is extremely attentive to children.

2

Even though this point of view may be exaggerated, it explains many things which otherwise the foreigner must misunderstand in the American, or must, what is perhaps worse, entirely overlook in him. It explains, for example, the great difference between what an American means when he talks of liberty and what an Englishman or a Frenchman means by the same word. The European who desires liberty takes for granted at the same time a tradition which is itself a check upon too great freedom; in matters of art and conduct tradition enters his character as an endowment of taste. But when the American speaks of liberty he has no idea of any check placed by any tradition upon his desire to do as he pleases. Liberty, as he conceives of it, is an opportunity to experiment, and his freedom will in the end be limited only by the hard lesson which experience may enforce. It was not by accident that the philosophy of pragmatism evolved itself in the United States, the philosophy which relegated truth itself to experiment, and in which, for all its cheerfulness, taste is at a discount. Perhaps it is a reason for distrusting pragmatism that it is the social expression of a nation which, from force of circumstances, has given up having a past, and to some extent has ceased to be guided by taste.

Perhaps it may seem too severe a criticism of any people to charge them with a wholesale lack of taste. Yet taste involves always a sense of chronology; per-

haps also a sense of geography; and these senses are the result of a certain studious respect for what men have done before us, and for the particular ends to which, by experience, they learned to adapt particular needs. As yet the American fails somewhat to reap this profit from the past. The tourist who sees some effect of Moorish architecture and on the same trip to Europe feels the charm of an English cottage, is not unlikely, provided he has the means, to incorporate his memory of both styles of architecture into his house at home. Some of our most exciting achievements in architecture have been so reached. We can not argue with the perpetrator of these mixtures, since by his philosophy of life they are not mixtures after all, but simply quotations from one unique source, the past.

Nor can we easily teach the young American to feel a nearer interest in Benjamin Franklin, let us say, than in Julius Cæsar; in either case he is overwhelmed with the misfortune the distinguished character suffers, in being dead. To all Americans, old or young, the past is a great negation, the infinite gulf in which dead things are swallowed up, and in eternity all the dead of all the ages are contemporaries. Therefore if the builder of the village house mixes his Moorish and English architecture, he justifies himself with the conviction that both styles were brought from Europe, and Europe is some place outside of America from which useful things can from time to time be resurrected. Similarly it is easy for the schoolboy,

and indeed for the grown man in the United States, to refer quite indiscriminately to George Washington, to Homer, to David, and to Barnum in a juxtaposition which makes the European gasp; for these men are alike dead, and the American has carefully avoided that meticulous acquaintance with the past which makes one sensitive to chronology or to category.

It is not the uneducated American of whom I am now speaking. The best illustration of this attitude toward the past is the poet-philosopher who perhaps is the most American of all our writers, R. W. Emerson. The English reviewers who found themselves bewildered by his indifference to chronology, disposed of his early books with polite amazement or with contempt, according to their individual way of dealing with incomprehensible things. "Life has no memory," they read in the great essay on *Experience,* and in the first lovely book on *Nature* they were told that time is illusion, and in almost every page of Emerson they were taught that time is only a method of thought, and that man is great as he emancipates himself from respect for other lands or other ages than his own. In almost every page they came upon lists of books or names of cities which seemed purposely disordered for an effect of humor; the inventories for which Walt Whitman has been assailed are only a moderate exaggeration of Emerson's. That Briton of common sense and not too great imagination, Thomas Hughes, was moved to register his conviction that Emerson was a glittering impostor—much as a modern reader might

accuse a clever man in our own day of catching the public ear with silly eccentricities.

But Emerson was singularly sincere and as far as possible from desiring to get attention by a trick. He was, however, American, and if we are to decide that indifference to the past is a weakness in the American character, then Emerson cultivated that weakness with all his heart. When he substituted his theology of an oversoul for the orthodox conception of God, he wished to do more than change the name of his deity. He wished to conceive of the soul as breathed through by an eternal force, equally wise, equally loving in all ages. Provided this oversoul inspire us, there is no need for study or for previous experience. "The soul circumscribes all things," he said, "it predicts all experience, in like manner it subtends time and space." When we are inspired, we are great men; without that inspiration we are dead, though we know history ever so thoroughly. In other words, Emerson was conceiving of a God who should be a substitute for the past, and who would make a knowledge of the past unnecessary. Such a God the Hebrew Jehovah was not. We must not seem to give the impression that the Americans of to-day who have the same point of view are necessarily followers of Emerson; many of them of course neglect to read him. But he is the true expression of his country's temperament, and is likely to remain so for many a year.

At Emerson's old home, Concord, a friend of mine recently found, in an American audience gathered to

hear him lecture, a curious confirmation of the American detachment from the past. The idea of lecturing at Concord at the home of the philosopher, of Hawthorne and of Thoreau, almost on the site of the little battle-field which had for the United States such momentous consequences, inspired my friend to such feeling of the past as a European would understand. When he faced his audience, however, he realized that most of them must have come to the United States since the Civil War, and that their interest in the old revolutionary skirmish and in the writers who once lived in the village was just about as immediate as their interest in Marathon or in the home of the obelisk-makers. My friend, telling me the story, said like a good American, "After all, they are quite right. Why live in the past?" I do not know whether he realized how near he was to quoting Emerson himself—"Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? . . . Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship." The American boys called to France in our armies were few of them studious readers of

Emerson, but most of them were of his school of thought. It was only for the sake of the future, after all, that they willingly engaged so deeply in what seemed to them the tragic result of a long past. Finding themselves hailed by friendly English comrades as cousins in blood, they learned as quickly as possible to conceal their astonishment; to many of them the remark was merely a compulsion to think for the first time of the stock from which they came—usually not an Anglo-Saxon stock. Arriving in France, they found themselves greeted with an extraordinary gratitude which implied something done in the past of which they were not aware. Upon inquiry they found that they were received as America's gift in return for Lafayette. Many of them, with the best disposition to be *au courant,* asked at once, Who was Lafayette? Some of them must have been disappointed to know that he died so long ago. All of them were really more interested in Marshal Foch.

The American philosophy that I have been here setting forth may explain also the American attitude toward the Germans, which in some respects differs slightly from the French or the British attitude. Even if Germany had not forced the United States to fight, the demonstration which Germans gave us in the United States that they had not after all abandoned their own past, would have been a matter of concern for all Americans conscious of the American philosophy. We had looked upon the Germans, cherishing in our midst their love of old customs, much as we

looked upon the Scotch in various communities, as eminently loyal citizens of the new world, who yet affectionately retained an antiquarian interest in the country of their origin. We found a certain charm in their memory of the old country, simply because the American so rarely exhibits any memory at all of the past; we did not suspect that tradition among the Germans was a thing more real than among those Massachusetts or Virginia families of which I have spoken, where a good-humored fashion makes something of the ancestors of the house. The early years of the war showed us, however, that some of our German neighbors had never given up their past, that they therefore had never become one with the other Americans, and that they seemed to wish no share in our future. If the other racial elements which have come to our shores should disclose a similar tendency in moments of stress, our great experiment in the new world would be obviously a failure. We feel that the war has proved, certainly for all other racial elements except the Germans, that the experiment is not a failure; as for the Germans, it has proved, we think, that some of them wish to have little part with us, and that those of them who are Americans at heart will make the typical American sacrifice, and drop their past altogether.

3

Any study of American character to-day that would arrive at the truth must, I think, face frankly, as I

here have tried to do, the extent to which the citizen of the United States, at least in the present generation, lives without a sense of the past. What America may become is perhaps suggested by the consciousness that most thoughtful Americans begin to have of the shortcomings in the national character—the shortcomings that result from this exclusive emphasis upon the future. More than any other nation that has played an important rôle in the world, we are without a sense of the soil; we quite literally live in a world of ideas, we quite literally get along somehow without a practical reckoning of time and space. We have developed a top-heavy way of life. When we speak of the home, since we have no sense of the local hearth as a Frenchman has, nor of the place from which our ancestors came as the British colonist has, we are forced to think of the world of ideas which are included in a household. The people for whom we have the household affection make up all that we know of home. To take this attitude toward life may be indeed to take an ideal attitude, but we begin to have among us here and there certain lonely philosophers, Professor George Santayana for example, who remind us that ideals must have roots in natural facts, and that to live merely in sentiments and affections is to follow a thin and perhaps a dangerous kind of existence. We wonder from time to time how long it will be before the readjustment which at present seems continuously needed in the United States will bring us to some point of stability, where our affections may

begin to attach themselves to quite earthly and natural shrines.

If the United States were really a melting-pot, we should expect our people, coming as they do from all races, to represent as it were the sum total of what all races might contribute to the common wealth of humanity. We might expect, therefore, to find in the United States much art, fine science and a noble poetry. That has indeed been the expectation of optimistic Americans, and the expectation has furnished the text for much comment from critical foreigners, who upon visiting our shores have marveled, perhaps with an inward satisfaction after all, that a country so new and supposedly full of energy should have as yet disclosed so meager an utterance in things of the spirit. The fact is, however, that a nation which has dropped its past has thereby dropped the instruments of expression. Language is but a series of sounds, mere groans and noises if you choose, until the ear has grown accustomed after many centuries to detect the significant shades and intonations of the specific groan. No language can be improvised, if the audience is to understand the speaker. The larger fabric of language, the racial memories to which an old country can always appeal, obviously do not exist in a land where every man is busy forgetting his past, separating himself from the memory of what his forefathers felt and said. Without tradition there can be no taste, and what is worse, there can be little for taste to act upon. We have indeed some approaches,

some faint hints and suggestions of a national poetry. The cartoon figure of Uncle Sam, for example, a great poet could perhaps push over into the world of art, but unless the poet soon arrives there will be few Americans left who can recognize in that gaunt figure the first Yankee, the keen, witty, audacious and slightly melancholy type of our countrymen as they first emerged in world history.

From among all our great men for the last two hundred years, of whom can we write a story or a poem with any expectation that the reader has heard of the man before—or, to be more generous toward the reader, with any expectation that, having heard of the man, he knows anything in particular about him? Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Boone, are names, indeed, but little more, to the American whose father reached the United States since 1864. George Washington is connected in some dim way with the story of a cherry tree, but his hatchet activity begins to be mixed up in the national memory with the fact that Lincoln is said to have split rails. Lincoln himself is the one national figure who remains eligible for literary uses, but it sometimes seems that for many of us he is only the representative in later costume of the cartoon figure of Uncle Sam. The attempts which poets have made and are making in the United States to begin a national literature are among the most interesting and pathetic in the history of art —pathetic because few of them remember what must precede art, a good store of legend or history which

the poet can draw upon and turn to emotional value. To speak of Trafalgar or of Blenheim to an Englishman is to stir an emotion already prepared, but in America to speak of the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor,* or of Vicksburg or of Valley Forge is simply to stir memories of the schoolroom in which the children of the newcomer tried to remember many facts of like importance and alike removed from his interest, since they all were embedded in a past, whether of Egypt or of England or of his own country.

We have thought that the recent war might indeed mark the beginning of such national memories as would make for us a national art. Yet that hope may be frustrated; for we dreamed of a similar beginning after the Civil War, while northerner and southerner could understand any reference to Stonewall Jackson or Robert Lee, while in New England even to the end of the nineteenth century most citizens could appreciate the wonderful monument which St. Gaudens made of Robert Gould Shaw. To-day, however, so many Bostonians happen to have been born in Italy that the figure of the young officer riding with his negro regiment is likely to suggest almost anything except a common tradition. So far as art is concerned, our task in America is to make the country a true melting-pot, to turn into a common heritage something of what each race brings to us of race memory and of race aptitude for beautiful things. We are disturbed to observe that the Italian who arrives among us with a fresh and apparently inexhaustible passion

for color and design becomes in the second generation a mere American, as poor in language as the rest of us; that in time the music-loving Russian forgets his gift, and that our own native Indian dies rapidly, leaving in our culture too slight a trace of his extraordinary sense of rhythm and color and design. All of us, in conceding something for the sake of a common understanding, have conceded so much that we have little left in common to understand.

If our lack of a past handicaps us in the matter of art, it handicaps us also in manners, since manners are themselves an art. Those societies which have a traditional behavior have manners; other societies must improvise their behavior as they go along. If the American seems impromptu in his ways, it is really remarkable that he does not seem even more so, since outside of the individual home or the particular part of the given city in which he may reside he is subject to no formulas of behavior, and if he has manners he is likely to suggest to his countrymen that he is imitating the foreigner. You may talk or walk or may conduct a drawing-room conversation in an English way, in a French way, in an Italian way, or in a German way; but it would be a bold critic who, after knowing America, would say just what is the American way of doing these things, since Americans on the whole do those and other things each as he pleases. There may seem at first sight little reason to object to a spontaneity of manner which has managed to slough off much impedimenta and to have brought to

the fore instinctive friendliness and unveiled sincerity. But there are other uses of behavior than merely to seem amiable; manners become at times vitally significant as language, and it is difficult indeed to speak with manners as with any other form of discourse unless the hearer is conversant with the particular tongue. In manners then, as in art, the occasional American who cares thoughtfully for his country's future, is at this moment considering by what means we may conserve, in one blended language which all of us may speak and understand, the total contribution of all the races that come to us.

Aside from the field of art, one might expect that a country which starts fresh, which stands on its own feet, which considers every man equal to every other provided he is honest and sincere and loyal to his neighbor, which reminds itself frequently that the world began when each one of us was born—it might be expected that such a country would achieve something clear and original in philosophy. Are not the old countries too much encumbered with problems raised by the fume of dialectic controversy? Would not a group of men beginning with the maturity of manhood and yet with the unembarrassed vision of children, see life at least somewhat as it is? This has indeed been our American hope, and our characteristic prophet has held it out to us as an ideal, lending much transcendental color to the argument. Professor Santayana, in our own day, the most subtle of our philosophers, has preached it with infinite charm and

persuasion. Yet being an astute critic of life, he observes that the citizen of the United States is so busy making himself agreeable to his neighbors by discarding traditional prejudices, and incidentally, perhaps, traditional inspirations, that his last state is not one of clear vision but of a vague diffused feeling. He is not preeminently an admirer of intelligence. He is in love with morality, which he interprets as a high state of feeling rather than as a considered course of conduct. There is here a difference between the moral sense of England and that of the United States; in England, if one may judge by the record of a long line of poets and prose writers, it is less in a man's favor that he should be intelligent than that he should be good, but in the United States it seems less in a man's favor that he should act well than that he should feel strongly about good conduct or that others should feel strongly about his conduct. We reduce as many of our problems as possible to this kind of moral question. Our political contests frequently resolve into a debate as to whether the candidate is or is not a good man, and the party which rises to the highest temperature of emotion wins—all this without much regard for the particular problem which the good man who is felt to be good by a majority of his countrymen will thereafter be called on to solve. Perhaps this extraordinary expression of feeling in matters of moral concern is an exhibition of racial sentiment otherwise repressed. Is the idea too fantastic? Man's heart must rest on something solid, and the Decalogue will

serve as a floating island in the world of ideas until we come to a broader and more firmly anchored territory.

The tendency to set character above everything else, this sentimentality, if I may call it so frankly, is not peculiar to any one race-strain in the total American complex; it characterizes all of us. Walt Whitman was truly American in his expression of diffuse and indiscriminate amiability. William James is truly American in putting an optimistic mood at the service of all his countrymen. It was a typical American who recently wrote to a serious journal in the United States complaining of the education given in our colleges, that it was too exclusively devoted to the training of the mind. Among all the faults attributable to our educational system, this special charge, that we trained the mind, we surely did not expect to hear. The danger of too great amiability is not merely that in the world of intelligence it makes us blind to those problems which can be solved only by intelligence, problems of pure mechanics or of pure physics or of economics, but that even in the world of emotion it ends at last by depriving us of standards, so that once we feel kindly toward the conduct and ideas of other men, we shortly are well-disposed to their feelings also. If it took a long time for the United States to orient itself in the World War, the cause should perhaps be sought not only in our detachment from European affairs but more profoundly in our lack of common standards by which to judge

conduct of any sort. The service of the war to us may prove in the end to be chiefly this, that we have limited the area of experience in which we are willing to measure things solely by an amiable disposition.

A foreigner expects of the American not only a new art and a new intelligence, but also great energy, great genius for machinery, and a faculty for organization. Even if he fails to discover the art and the intelligence, he usually decides that the American indeed has the mechanical or the organizing gift. The American, himself, however, is rather surprised at this verdict. Why should he be praised for his machines? The fact is that he sets little store by them, and merely wonders in his turn why the foreigner does not avail himself of the same simple aids toward comfort. Much as the American has been accused of loving luxury, he really does not value merely comfortable or useful things, but in a world where it is easy to have comfort he wonders what great virtue there would be in going without it. Grave danger there is in organization, as the American is aware; he knows that society has not yet found the right adjustment of machinery to human comfort and leisure; he knows that we may become slaves in some degree to the instruments we created for our convenience; but he also knows that this peril is not peculiarly American. The difference between him and the European, as he sees it, is that the European fears to use any machinery, and he does not. He fears no loss in human dignity if he substitutes a mechanical street-

sweeper for a row of laboring men. It seems to him that if the machine can clear away the mud, then sweeping the streets is no fit work for a human being. He can not see that the invention and the use of machines is any great credit to him nor any sign, as the foreigner so often interprets it to be, that his heart is set on material things. He cares little for money, though he happens to live in a fortunate land where money is comparatively easy to win. It is on this subject that he is most sensitive as far as Europe is concerned, since the foreigner who gives him lectures on his too feverish pursuit of gold has in many cases come to America to make money by the lecture. At least by his own account the foreigner does not come out of admiration of American art or of American science.

The American wonders also why Europe does not recognize his extraordinary preoccupation with ideas. His wars have been fought for ideas, his universities are debating grounds of new ideas, he rebuilds his cities at great inconvenience in order to carry out his latest idea, and he will exchange all the gold he has for any idea which almost any European brings him. The latest success in French philosophy or British thought, the newly risen artist on the European stage, is likely to find his first and largest audience in the United States, and the puzzled American when he reads an English criticism of the low state of our intellectual life, frequently wonders whether British idealism has reached such perfection that it would

not notice the difference if all the American purchasers of British books and patrons of British art were to withdraw their support. He is puzzled at the greeting accorded by the foreign press when he invests all the money he has in some ancient and priceless work of art. What better use could he put money to than to buy with it the lovely tapestry, the Rubens, or the DaVinci which he admires? To his great surprise he is accused of robbing British art if he buys a Rubens, or British literature if he is willing to pay more than any one else for a manuscript of Burns. He would be accused of robbing French art if he managed to purchase the *Venus de Milo*. The two questions that perplex him are: first, why a portrait of Rubens or of Rembrandt should be more British than American; and, second, why he should be thought to have done something ignoble if he pays more for the manuscript of a British poet than any British citizen is willing to pay? What Americans really think about art, to what their hearts are really given in this world as between material accomplishment and the things of the spirit, can not yet be judged by their own product in art or in literature or even in science, for our nation by forgetting its past has temporarily sacrificed the ability to accomplish great things in the world of expression. But if we have thrown overboard our past, it has been in order to make the greatest of all experiments in human brotherhood. Where we do set our scale of values and where we shall set them when we once have a common back-

ground out of which to make a great art of our own, has been witnessed for a long time in the shrines of European poets which American subscriptions have helped to maintain, in the monuments to great artists, and in the annual pilgrimages abroad which all of us make—not the rich only, but every one of us who can by any sacrifice find the means to travel.

4

In such times as these when wise men scrutinize with rigor even the things they love best, it would not be profitable for an American, writing either for his people or for the foreign reader, to praise his own country much. Yet I suppose the last mystery in the American character which should be exposed to the foreigner is the reason why Americans, having so little tradition, do after all love their country. What began with us as a necessity has become a conviction and a hope—our faith that it is possible for man to begin again and to win an unprejudiced future. We believe that the men who arrive by the thousands from older shores to be our comrades may, in changing from the discipline of Europe to the freedom of our land, succeed in a new statement of human perfection. This has long been our hope; it was expressed for us in many a great sentence of Lincoln, in many a stirring line of Whitman, and in many a paragraph of Emerson. "Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you. For you

is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Cæsar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house heaven and earth; Cæsar called his house Rome; you perhaps call yours a cobbler's trade, a hundred acres of plowed land, or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your domain is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world." If you were to stand at the dock and read such words as these to each shipload of immigrants, you would merely be putting into language the hope that brings them. If you were to read these words to their children and to their grandchildren, you would still be expressing what they have come to love in the United States, and what they believe can best be achieved there.

Meanwhile our task is to make a common past of our own—not so much of the past, we hope, as to shackle us, but just enough of the past to talk with, to give us a language for art, for poetry, to give us a proper vehicle for our emotions. We would relate our idealism at last to the facts beneath our feet. We would have a philosophy which begins in a clear understanding of the world around us, and finds in that world intelligent means to reach ideal ends. We believe that by education the vast majority of men can be made capable of this development. Our faith has been immensely strengthened by what we saw in our army in Europe, regiment upon regiment of all races and all languages, yet all American and loyal.

Loyal to what? To their ideal of a country where race does not count. They came home, we believe, with discriminating admiration for what they had seen of the great qualities of their allies. They had been at school. They had had a glimpse of that international sphere in which the nations will some day practise unselfishness. But they brought back no great love for the past—only indeed for the beautiful things out of the past, the things of art which we have always loved in the United States, and which seem to belong not to time at all.

FRENCH IDEALS AND AMERICAN

IV

FRENCH IDEALS AND AMERICAN

1

In France we have caught reflections of our character in the opinions which the Frenchman from time to time lets slip in his familiar talk. Since these opinions show the speaker's character also, we are prompted to use them for a comparison of the two nations, of their accomplishments and of their ideals. The average American who would understand France may best begin with a comparison of ideals, for he will find it hard to believe that by his standards the French have accomplished much, nor from his point of view are they an active or an energetic people, nor apparently do they wish to be. He will admit that in moments of extreme peril they have improvised a kind of desperate efficiency, at Valmy in 1792, at the Marne in 1914, but he will think these moments exceptional. He will think of the war debt, of the billions which were accepted, but for which he receives no thanks. If, however, the American begins by asking what France wishes to do, what is her object in life, the inquiry is likely to disclose some weakness, or at least some doubtful areas, in the program of his own ideals. It will then be easier for him perhaps to

understand how marvelous—war debt or no war debt—is the accomplishment of France, measured in terms of the French spirit.

In material achievements France and the United States differ greatly, but in our ideals we at least have the appearance of agreement; certain formulas of our hopes and of our faith are spread like platitudes over the daily speech of both nations. If you should ask an American audience, for example, whether the mind is more than the body, whether what a man is should count for more than what he has, the American audience would say yes—especially on Sunday. Should you ask a French audience the same question, they would give the same answer, but they would wonder why you asked; they would also wonder why the American is so given to saying over these phrases of idealism, yet so slow to act upon them. Long ago the French made it the principle of their national life that spiritual things should be valued above material, that a man's riches should be looked for in his character. We live by no such principle, however we may have flattered ourselves, and in France, of all countries, under the scrutiny of friends who like ourselves take inventory of national ideals, we are most certain to learn how widely our practise varies from our talk.

Before America entered the war the French general public thought of us as a nation of millionaires with a rather commercial interest in life. After we decided to take the side of the Allies, the average Frenchman continued to think of us as millionaires,

but he realized that our chief interest in life could not be mercenary since we had cast our lot on a costly if not a losing side; in fact, he began to see in us, as he generously said, idealists fighting for an abstraction, not for material gain, and our crossing of the Atlantic he spoke of as a crusade. Regiment after regiment of crusaders arrived on French soil, prayed for, waited for, and beautifully welcomed with curiosity of spirit as well as with open arms; every French citizen who understood English was alert for the first precious words to fall from the lips of the new-found idealists. What did fall from those lips has become almost a commonplace, it fell so uniformly—"What funny little locomotives!" "What a queer sound the whistle makes!" "How odd, they have no plumbing!" "Why doesn't the elevator work?" These were our instinctive and unconsidered first comments upon France. Said one astonished native: "If you really speak first of machinery, if that is your involuntary thought and your nearest interest in life, perhaps you are fighting on the wrong side; in machinery it is the Germans who excel." Of course we answer that Americans are not interested chiefly in machines, that we have eyes for beauty, for the French landscape, for the memorials of time and for the modern art that everywhere enrich French civilization, that we have quick sympathy for the heroism which ennobled France in the Great War; but the fact remains that we do not as a rule speak of these things, that in practise our idealism does not find spontaneous expression.

Is it only that we are as yet a people of limited speech, still without a medium for the generous emotions we believe are ours? In that case, how odd that we should have gone to France, where the human spirit for centuries has known how to utter itself! Or is it that before the war we were driving unconsciously into that same admiration for purely creature comforts and that same trust in mechanical substitutes for character which perverted modern Germany? The Frenchman is quite aware that his armchairs are less comfortable than ours, that his elevators are less practical, and that his street-cars are smaller; but in explanation he reminds you that his chief effort hitherto has been toward spiritual things, and he knows quite as well as we that whereas one must travel to America or to Germany to enjoy perfection of machinery, it is to France one must go for art, for scholarship and for civilization.

True to this central principle, that the mind rather than the body is precious, the French are more careful in spiritual things than in physical. To give a common illustration, many American soldiers have wondered at the frankness of the French, man, woman or child, in matters—shall we say of physical hygiene? But the American may not have noticed how far the Frenchman excels him in spiritual delicacy. We are modest about our bodies, the French are modest about their mind. Nakedness and a frank acceptance of physical fact astonish the Frenchman far less than the American, but on the other hand the Frenchman will not slap your shoulder when he first makes your ac-

quaintance, he will not at once call you by your first name, nor ask you to address him by his; he will normally be cautious about inviting a new acquaintance into his home. If the American casually decides that the Frenchman is not fastidious, it might surprise him to know that the Frenchman is shocked at the wholesale indelicacy of our manners, which make little distinction between those friends who are precious to us and those acquaintances whom we have barely met. Friendship in France, like every other communion of spirit, is a delicate relation, and there is a kind of art in cherishing it. This art we Americans have not greatly cultivated; in France it has often seemed that we hardly have eyes to recognize it, not even in its loveliest forms.

The ideal of spiritual modesty is illustrated by the way the French plan their homes. On the street you will find a somewhat severe, if not forbidding, wall; in the house you will come first on some officers' or servants' quarters, and even on the kitchen, but as you penetrate the buildings you arrive at a court or a garden, and around the court will be the family rooms, the household shrine. The Frenchman knows that, even from a practical point of view, such an arrangement is the most convenient. But his reason for so ordering his house is that he wishes to give the greatest privacy to the things which seem to him most precious. If he has read at all of our habits in the United States, he knows that we follow the contrary principle, placing on the street those rooms which are for the graces of life,

and giving the screen of privacy to the kitchen, to the pantry and to the serving quarters. Here and there in France the astonished citizen has grasped the idea that in the small New England town, where the bay-window of the house is exposed to the public gaze, the proud family will place their group of Rogers' statuary on a pedestal in the window and will pull back the curtains. Amiable as this attitude is toward the curiosity of the neighbors, the Frenchman wonders why we do not put our works of art on the sidewalk and have done with it.

2

To praise the French home at the expense of the American may seem a straying far afield; for some of us think that no race prizes the home as we do, and many have understood that in French life the home counts for little, and all of us have heard it said that in the French language there is no word for home. It is true of course that the French attitude toward the home differs from the English, as the English in turn differs from the American, but a competent comparison of the three attitudes will not at all be to the disadvantage of the French. Certainly as between the Americans and the French, we are in no position to say that the French underestimate the home. They have always had a satisfactory way of naming it. Before the war they called it *la maison,* the house; to be at home was to be *chez soi.* During the war, however, the word *foyer,* hearth, a literary word, lost something of its

bookishness and crept into the talk of the French soldier, perhaps because these years reminded him of what his home peculiarly means. It means, in the old Latin sense, a hearth—a definite fireplace, where the household flame burns continuously from generation to generation, and where the hopes and the sorrows of the family are prayed for, or discussed, or suffered, from father to son. Especially the French home is a place where the family is born. We Americans retain enough of the Old World tradition to wish for our dead a definite and consecrated burying-place; at that end at least our lives touch the soil. But to the old Latin spirit, to the Frenchman, if he should express his frank opinion, a people who touch the soil only in the graveyard are not more than half decent. What should we think of a people who took no care to mark the place where their dead lie? The Frenchman has the same opinion of those who take no thought where their children come to birth. For him, the home ought to be as definitely the place where people are born as the churchyard is the place where they are buried, and he feels as strongly a pious sentiment for the room where his race first saw the light, as for the spot where each ancestor closed his eyes.

In the French army the average soldier came from a hearth where he, his father, his grandfather and his great grandfather were born. Many soldiers came from homes of a much lengthier tradition, but the average reached back at least so far. One Frenchman was heard to remark, "It is you Americans who have no

word for home in your language; I hear you say in Paris, 'Let's go home to the hotel'—that word *home* means, I judge, the last place you left your baggage. How do you say in American, 'Let's go back to the house where I was born, my father, my grandfather, and my great grandfather?'" To this question the American is tempted to retort that he loves his home as dearly as other people, that the American home has special virtues of which he is peculiarly proud, and that he has frequently been homesick—which implies that the home is for him something more than the last place he left his baggage. But even as he makes the retort he will realize that for us, necessarily moving about as most Americans have moved in our new and not quite settled country, we have defined the home as the group of people, the family; we have attached our affections to a human relationship exclusively, and we have taught ourselves to depart lightly from the actual soil on which our hearth was once founded, and from the garden or the fields in which our childhood was passed. When the Englishman speaks of home he means England, though he means also of course his family circle, and perhaps the particular hearth beside which the family circle may still live. When the American speaks of home he means his family circle, without much reference to its location. When the Frenchman speaks of his hearth he means also of course his family circle, but primarily he means the family altar and the actual ground made sacred to his primitive and profound piety by the lives

of his ancestors which have been begun and ended there.

This attitude of the French toward the location of the home is the clue to their patriotism and to their religion. Their gods are found in the soil of France —the soil, not as a figure of speech, but as the actual earth which they have worked with their own hands. France may be reckoned an agricultural nation, but the difference between the agriculture of Burgundy or of the Midi and the agriculture of Wisconsin, let us say, or of Minnesota, is so great that it is really a mistake to try to express both by one word. The French farmer raises his crops, but his labor has another end than the production of food. His toil is an ancient cult, the full sentiment of which he feels at every stage of his work. No wonder he is reluctant to let machinery, no matter how efficient, come between him and the earth, in which, when he labors by primitive means, he can almost fancy he touches hands with his fathers. He lives close to nature in the poetic sense that he is conscious of the dramatic vicissitudes of weather, of the large element of chance in sunshine and rain; with the oldest of faiths he recognizes dependence on dim gods, to whom the fields and the weather and the human family belong. Whatever religious debates take place in France, the essential religion of the French is not abstract. The French atheist has it as profoundly as the Protestant or the Roman Catholic; it is his feeling that the earth is kind and motherly, that life is a perpetual miracle spring-

ing from the actual soil, and that to live close to the soil and exposed to the weather, which seems to vitalize that soil, is to take part in the perpetual sacrament of existence. Sharing this sentiment, he is near that antique vision of life which worshiped Demeter and Bacchus, and indeed these gods, though they now may be unnamed, are still realized instinctively in the French heart. What the Frenchman will do with his life, therefore, or what kind of work he will devote himself to, can not be determined entirely by economic considerations. He may prefer, for example, to make wine rather than beer, since beer is a manufactured thing, independent of weather and the seasons, whereas the vine really is France—a thing of religion, a cult, the product of prayers, of a beneficent heaven, and of a fruitful earth.

This national interpretation of the soil can be illustrated from many a French book. Rostand's *Chantecler* is a modern instance. To the French critic this phantasy remains a somewhat unsuccessful *tour de force,* he will tell you that the costuming of the actors as barnyard fowls made the piece impossible to present, and he will point out shallowness in the sentiment and lapses of taste in the dialogue; but the foreigner can find in *Chantecler* an embodiment of the good sense, the courage and the idealism of the French, qualities which the war has brought into relief; in this play he sees also, and chiefly, the peculiar French love of the soil. Chantecler, the cock, is the emblem of France; he crowns all weather-vanes. Our bird is

the eagle, but the Frenchman has a sense of humor and does not mind taking the symbol of himself from his beloved farmyard. We might be tempted to reflect that the cock is not the bird which flies high, and certainly the foreigner, contemplating the tenacity with which the French have clung to their small farms, has often judged that the imagination of this people is too limited. In the United States we have frankly boasted of the grandiose sweep which we think characterizes our own attitude to life.—"The eagle is a bird of large ideas; the continent is his home." But the Frenchman is no less an idealist, even though he keeps his good sense and from time to time smiles at himself. Chantecler believes that his crowing brings up the sun each day, that the light of the world depends on his singing. Though he loves the earth, he has no great turn for facts; the soil for him is poetry. In France it is the women who have the greatest sense of fact, and in the play the Golden Pheasant, who loves Chantecler, tries to persuade him out of his heroic illusion. When she asks what is the secret of his marvelous singing, his reply is one of the fine illustrations of French sentiment for the soil: "I never sing but when my claws have weeded the grass, and dislodged the pebbles, and have reached at last down to the soft black soil; then, when I touch the good earth, I sing, and that is half the mystery, half the secret of my song—not the kind of song you must think up as you sing, but the kind that flows through you like sap from the earth you are rooted in."

In a quite different direction, the ideal of the hearth and of the soil throws light on a much misunderstood side of French character. The worship of the ancestral hearth and of the ancestral earth explains the small French family. Critics of France have encouraged us to believe that her families are small because of some decadence in the race, but if this is true, the decadence must have started several hundred years ago. In France you can buy in any stationer's store, among other mottoes with which to decorate your wall, the framed copy of a sonnet, first printed in the sixteenth century, on "*Le Bonheur de ce Monde.*" In this inventory of happiness we begin with these ideals, "A comfortable home, clean and beautiful, a garden wall tapestried with fragrant trees, fruits and good wine, a simple life and few children." To-day, as in the sixteenth century, the French father and mother, mindful of the household shrine, pray for one son and for one daughter, and for no more children. The son will inherit the hearth, and the daughter will marry some boy who inherits a hearth, but what provision can be made for a second son or for a second daughter? The family birthplace can no more be divided than the graves of one's ancestors. However mistaken the French ideal may be in the light of other social theories, at least their own theory of the family is a noble one, and it has made home life in France precious and sacred to a degree which should put to silence any criticism the foreigner in his ignorance might make. If the French hearth has fewer comforts than the

American apartment, if it lacks the plumbing which seems to be the real god of the American soul, at least it is a genuine piety that has kept the house unchanged, and those who live by the French fireside are conscious to-day, as few other people are, of the dignity of the home.

Perhaps because of this consciousness the French feel the worth of the individual more than we do, which means of course that they appreciate the dignity of old age. Our American soldiers, seeing decrepit old men breaking stones, rather inefficiently, along French roads, often commented on the impractical way France has of doing things; at home we should use the stone crusher and some road machines, and the old men would be out of sight. With us they would indeed be out of sight, in the poor-house perhaps, or in the old people's home, conveniently shelved until their time should come to die. France does not like poor-houses, nor old people's homes. The proper home for old people is their own hearth. The state, therefore, humanely provides such moderate work as aged men can perform by the roadside, and society finds such simple duties for old women—perhaps tending the flocks—as will keep even those whom we should call inefficient still in their place in society, earning with dignity their right to live among their fellowmen, no matter what their age. Once more *Chantecler* furnishes an illustration, in the old hen, the cock's mother, who dispenses wisdom in shrewd proverbs from over the top of the wicker basket in which she finishes her

days. When we understand this noble attitude of France, this frank envisaging of all of human life, quiet old age as well as vigorous youth, this desire to make life kindly and human, we are not likely to think so well of ourselves; for nobody in his senses would choose for his own later years the poor-house or the old folks' home rather than a life in the open air, as in France, with self-respect and an active work still to do for society.

3

When the Frenchman and the Anglo-Saxon agree that spirit is more than matter, the Frenchman does not mean exactly what the Anglo-Saxon means. For us the life of the spirit is emotional rather than intellectual; for the Frenchman the life of the spirit is both intellectual and emotional, with emphasis perhaps on the intellect—a life of feeling, certainly, of sentiment and of intuition, but chiefly a life of reason. Even while we agree, therefore, in the contrast between matter and spirit, we may be quite far apart in our understanding of the words, and the separation may reoccur in our use of certain other words, equally familiar. When, for example, we hear France spoken of as the land of liberty and of art, perhaps we miss the special point of the remark, since we do not know what liberty or art is in the French scheme of life, nor are we aware that in France art and science mean more nearly the same thing than they do in the United States. With us liberty implies the absence or the re-

moval of something—the word suggests an escape; with the French, liberty implies the acquisition of something, and the word suggests control. To us art is an addition to life, a luxury; to the French it is a way of living. Our art is to be found in museums, in studios, in rich men's houses—we think that, if ever we have the time and the money, we too shall enjoy the privilege of art; but in France art is a quality of every-day existence, without which life is not considered worth while. It is hardly too much to say further that, to the French mind, art and science are practically identical; at least, the words liberty, art, and science, as the French use them, involve a single ideal, and form together a harmonious comment on the natural conditions in which man finds himself. The average Frenchman, though his philosophy may be unconscious and inarticulate, conceives of the world as made up of forces and instincts, themselves neither good nor bad—blind forces, as we say—which, however, can be directed to good or to bad ends, according as we have the skill and the desire. Not all Frenchmen, of course, take this point of view; there are no doubt many who think, as the Middle Ages taught, that in essentials human nature and the nature of the world about us are bad and need repression; there are many more who believe with Rousseau that nature, especially human nature, is essentially good, and that to be happy man needs only the opportunity to follow his instincts. But the majority of men and women in France approve by tradition and by training the hu-

mane teaching which readers of books associate with the great name of Aristotle—that excellence lies in the control which man establishes over the forces of nature —over his own nature to begin with; and that without intelligent direction of these forces man is a slave or a passive victim, as a boat without a pilot is the plaything of the storm; but that in the measure of man's knowledge of the forces that surround him he becomes free to achieve whatever destiny he dreams of, as the pilot who understands the mechanics of sailing is free to sail where he will, and the wind is for him no longer an obstacle nor a difficulty, but a source of power. In this point of view art and science are much the same thing; man is free only in proportion as he controls the forces of nature and in proportion as these forces do not control him, and he can take control of these forces only by study, by intelligence, by self-discipline—virtues which in operation become science or art.

The implications of this doctrine make clear why the French prize above other virtues reasonableness and self-control, and why so eager a desire for individualism combines in them with a profound respect for tradition. Their search for freedom, as we have just defined it, makes sacred a man's individual personality, but at the same time the desire to understand the eternal forces of life in order to control them compels respect for the experiences and for the wisdom of the past. The world has called humane that Greek morality which laid upon man himself, rather than

upon heredity or environment, the responsibility of choosing the best; and of all nations the French have preserved longest, in the midst of contradictory modern philosophies, the humane ideal. They say with Aristotle that where there is no choice of action there can be no virtue, and that where men are compelled to do right, evil may indeed be prohibited but there can be no positive good. The man who by temperament is ignorant of fear is, of course, no coward, yet he is not brave; we must call him rash, and we must deny him the credit of being virtuous, for he has acted as irresponsibly as the feather that floats in the wind, or as the stone that sinks through the water. He has fulfilled his nature, to be sure, but without conscious choice. Those who are sheltered from temptation are neither good nor bad—they are simply untried. To be moral, therefore, the Frenchman thinks one must be absolutely free, even free from the law itself; for that reason we need not be surprised to find in French life at all points what at first seems an unmeaning paradox, that though the Frenchman's ideal of culture by its very reasonableness will sooner or later articulate itself into laws, yet the Frenchman will resent the existence of the laws—he will create academies and then make fun of them—and why not? since an ideal so articulated becomes a kind of constraint toward excellence, and to that extent it robs man of the opportunity to be virtuous.

When he is quite free, however, the Frenchman feels induced to use his liberty wisely—at least it seems

to him common sense to profit by the experience stored up in the past, in the form of tradition and more subtly in the guise of taste. When you are free to make what you will of life—that is, when you have the skill to make what you will of it, you begin to see, as the profoundest kind of morality, the opportunity to discriminate among your ideals; and this choice involves taste. Perhaps we might say that the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin races seek in general the same degree of excellence, but at least they define life differently, and from the difference in this initial definition comes a wide difference in the quality of their final ideals. Since the Anglo-Saxon has been brought up in a philosophy which on the whole thinks of life as a collection of bad impulses, of temptations to resist or to run away from, against that background his ideal achievement is character, goodness, which is to him the chief morality. Since the Frenchman conceives of life as a mass of unorganized and neutral forces to be brought into order only by intelligent mastery of them, and since that order will vary according as his knowledge of other men's experiences teaches him to discriminate and to know the best, against the background of this problem his ideal virtues are intelligence and taste, and he defines morality chiefly in these terms.

We can not understand all that the war meant to France unless we reflect that in the German legions a very different philosophy had taken arms. The French soldier recognized in the atrocities inflicted upon his country and upon his hearth a demonstration of ways

of thought not his, which, if successful, would make it impossible for him to keep his way of thought at all. Not every German, nor many of them perhaps, had read Nietzsche and Treitschke, of whom we heard much at the beginning of the war; but it seems that these writers were typical, and that if they did not influence popular German thought, they were influenced by it. Their philosophy, illustrated on a colossal scale by the German armies, conceived of the world as a collection of forces which yield power, not when they are controlled, but when they are followed. When we chop wood, to give the simplest illustration, we do not lay the log against the ceiling and lift the ax; we make use of gravitation to do our work. "Something is checked in every impulse which reason guides—better to follow the impulse," says this philosophy; "if the impulse is to selfishness, let us be more selfish; if to cruelty, let us be more cruel, if war is terrible, let us add to it another terror; whatever else we do, let us not arrest life with what the French would call the control of reason, but which to our philosophy is but hesitation and lack of nerve. So to take life as one vast selfishness, as one unvaried sailing before the wind, is to be successful, to be a superman." That such a philosophy conscientiously followed will indeed yield power of a sort, the French would not deny, nor can our armies deny it after facing the poison gas and the organized devastation of those years; but this is power of a kind that the French spirit believes ignoble —better to perish than to survive by it, for it makes

the spirit of man conform more and more to the purely brute operations of the world, it implies an efficiency impersonal, irresponsible and cruel, and finally it strengthens those impulses of the body which, if uncontrolled, are but prison bars for the spirit; whereas the ideal of intelligent choice, the humane ideal, looks toward the dignity of the individual, considers the right of other men to be dignified in their own personalities, and seeks to bring about that subordination of material and bodily forces to the guidance of the spirit, which alone to the humane philosophy is freedom.

4

No one can understand this French conception of art, as no one could understand the similar Greek conception, without distinguishing clearly between art and artifice. The first comment of the Anglo-Saxon on all art is likely to be that it is artificial; his comment upon the French life, itself an art, is that it partakes too much of the quality of artifice. The difficulty is that such a comment assumes civilization as a natural thing. The Frenchman knows better. When our mothers sent us to childhood parties and cautioned us to behave naturally, they did not mean what they said; they meant that we should wear our acquired arts of courtesy as though they were natural. In that sense all civilization is not natural, and French life, being the most highly civilized, has most the character of art. But the French themselves are even more severe

than we are in condemning artifice, which to them is not art but its most perverse enemy. Art for them must be frank and sincere, a quite open control of means to reach an intelligible ideal. There is nothing secret about it; its glory is the large part that reason and calculation frankly play in it—as any choice between good and evil should be calculating and reasonable. Artifice on the other hand is the putting on of disguise, the assuming of methods which do not harmonize with the genuine purpose; it is a too great emphasis upon means and a too slight valuation of the noble end. Art is, as it were, the contrast or other pole to nature; it is the condition which is reached when man has given an interpretation and a direction to the chaos of crude experience. In between these extremes is artifice, partaking of the quality of both—half directed, half meaningless. It is often a weakness of the race, however, to prefer artifice to art, since in artifice the untrained mind can recognize so much of what seems reality—that is, so much of what remains in the crude state of nature. It is the very condemnation of artifice, however, that it is an imitation. In Chantecler's farmyard we hear suddenly the cry of the cuckoo. A silly hen runs up; "Which is it, the one in the woods, or the one in the farmer's clock?" "The one in the woods," they tell her. "Ah," she sighs with relief, "I was afraid I had missed the other one."

Illustrations of this French point of view occur most easily in the realms of judgment in which the Anglo-Saxon is most readily severe—in those actions

which he will dispose of promptly as vicious or wrong. Some of these actions the French temperament will excuse, or at least will reserve opinion on them, since they may well be sincere expressions of genuine ideals; the ideals may be matters of taste, but they have been reached by choice, and they imply no failure on the actor's part to assume responsibility for his own destiny. Other conduct, however, a Frenchman will utterly condemn with more than Anglo-Saxon severity, though at first the case seems much the same as that with which he has dealt leniently; he has no forgiveness for behavior in which the actor fails to be intelligent and responsible—in which, consequently, the actor is insincere, wearing a mask on his real intentions. From this point of view a Frenchman was speaking of a noted writer, now in his dotage, who lives with a woman whom he introduces as his housekeeper, but who is really the mother of his children, and who now in his old age directs his affairs for him with something of the tyrant's hand. The Frenchman speaking of this case condemned it utterly; then remembering that he spoke to an Anglo-Saxon, he added quickly. "I do not presume to pass judgment on his love-affairs —I would not say that they were wrong; but for such a great man to disguise the facts of his life and to be told to do this and to do that by some one of whom he seems afraid, is altogether ignoble." In other words, Abelard and Heloise are admirable to the imagination, no matter how little their career may recommend itself as a desirable program, but Abelard must not allow

himself to be henpecked. It is not only in doubtful spheres of conduct, however, that the French exact a sincere art of life; they are also on their guard against artificial goodness. They can understand lovers and saints equally—they despise equally the street-walker and the professional good man. The most revealing caution the Frenchman can give to the Anglo-Saxon is the shrewd advice, "Do not let my people suspect that you are earning your living by being good."

No better example need be sought of the French conception of art than in the field of manners. Even in France, let us admit quickly, there are people whose manners seem artificial and others whose manners are as we say natural; yet all manners everywhere are acquired, and in France they are recognized as the means in ordinary conduct by which man achieves freedom in his relations with other men. Without manners we should meet our fellows only on the plane of those physical appetites which indeed furnish their own expression, but which limit the range of action for the spirit. Far from being spontaneous or uncalculated, manners to the French mind should always have a definite purpose; if this purpose is clear and admirable, the manners also will be admirable and sincere, but if the manners have no purpose or an insufficient one, they will be artificial. Just how many calling cards one leaves at the door is a matter of little consequence; convention here is likely to be artificial. But table manners, to take the opposite extreme, will be sincere

and noble, since they are supremely necessary for any society which would live in the spirit. The purpose of table manners is to disguise the undoubted fact that at meal time a number of animals are gathered to feed. If men wished to observe in the process of eating no other fact than this, manners would not be necessary; but we would make of the sharing of food a sacrament of higher kinds of sustenance, an exchange of ideas, of spiritual bread, and to do this we cultivate such conduct as will prevent the physical fact from obtruding. For that reason we tell children not to reach too frantically for the bread plate. If this illustration seems academic, it will not seem so to those who have watched American soldiers and French side by side on the battle front at mess time. The American soldier, lined up before the kitchen, received his rations with great expedition, sat down on the nearest rock, or leaned against a tree, or simply stood in the middle of the road, cleared his plate, washed it up, and got the meal over with. The French soldier, by contrast, would seek always three or four companions and would sit down with the group, in the mud, if necessary, for a half-hour or an hour of what could be called by no less dignified term than a ritual of friendship. Whatever the degree of their education, their conversation was likely to be a sharing of thought and a feeding of the mind. That this difference between their use of manners and our neglect of them was not unnoticed on their part, they evidenced in many a shrewd remark.

"Why is it," one *poilu* was asked, "that even near the front you give so much time to your meals, and carry on such conversations as one would expect only at a dinner table in time of peace?" "Because," answered the little man in blue, "if we are fighting for civilization, we might as well remain civilized."

This ideal of manners can be summed up in the word *etiquette,* which of course we took from the French. We seem to have taken it, as many an American soldier now suspects, from the end of the French freight cars, where the label is pasted to show the destination of the cargo. The second and the third syllables of this word give us our "ticket." What is etiquette? To us perhaps it is a system of manners one must cultivate if one wishes to be like other folk in artificial society. To the French, etiquette in every walk of life is quite simply the label which shows where you are going. Perhaps it would be better to say, not that your destination is the consequence of your manners, but that your manners are chosen carefully to direct you to the end you desire. Do you wish to talk with the shop-keeper, or with the President, or with the King of England? There are ways and means of doing so, and if you care enough to master this etiquette you can have your will, but this is a career for intelligence, for patience and for purpose—also for the imagination. The French think highly of manners for the reason that they esteem intelligence as a divine thing; manners indicate that men and women have conceived of an ideal and are studying

to reach it, leaving as little as possible to chance, and trusting as much as possible to the mind. "What do you suppose is the derivation of this word?" a Frenchman was asked. "I think it may come," he said, "from the Greek word which gives us *ethics*." He was wrong, but his false etymology indicated the truth that for the French spirit, intelligence and manners are moral duties.

5

Let us return to the idea with which we began. What one thinks of the French will eventually depend on what choice one makes of a philosophy of life. Differences of language can be overcome, and superficial differences of custom, but there will remain the question whether we really share the point of view which underlies the whole culture of France—whether we really believe that the spirit is more than the body, and whether we interpret spirit merely as fine feeling, or as emotion guided by intelligence. The Anglo-Saxon, and those of us who live in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, have been brought up to respect emotion as something opposed to reason. Reason we say is cold; when we call a man calculating we mean no compliment. That poetry or prose we esteem most highly which is most emotional; the work of Pope or of Swift we incline to rate second, since reason so obviously is at the heart of it. Certainly a life without feeling, no matter how rational, would be an existence almost diabolical; it is a fair charge against such a

poet as Alexander Pope that his art expresses too little emotion to satisfy the experience of the average man. Yet if one is to follow a humane philosophy—that is, if one is to believe that whatever order is in the world must be put there by reason, by imagination, by the intelligence of man, one must class reason, intelligence and imagination as the divine instruments by which man works, and one must find even in ideas themselves a subject for emotion.

It is not unusual in a French theater to see an audience applaud an idea as we might applaud an action, and more than once in her history France has given herself as a nation to the prosecution of the most advanced and exalted ideas. More than other nations she has the credit of following her ideals to their logical end, cost what it may; not even her own superb common sense can distract her from the reckless pursuit of a dream once possessed. When Chantecler discovers that the sun has risen even without his song, he clings to his ideal; "I must sing." "But how can you keep on when your work perhaps is useless?" asks the Golden Pheasant. "I must work." "Even if you don't make the sun rise?" persists the Pheasant. "That is because I am the herald of a dawn more remote! My cries pierce the night, making those day-wounds men call stars. Never shall I see shine on the steeples the light of the finished heaven, the day made all of stars touching side by side; but if I keep on singing, punctual and loud enough, and if in each farmyard the other cocks sing after me, loud enough and just on

time, I think there will be no more night." "When?" insists the Pheasant. "One of these days!"

Since 1870, it is true, the government of France, and perhaps her whole people, have neglected the development of their national resources, have failed to improve village life, have let go by those modern inventions for comfort and sanitation which the American on his first arrival in France sadly misses; but it is also true that since 1870 France has lived under such a threat as the American, safe in his own continent, can not easily understand. And more profoundly it is true that France has permitted this shadow to affect only her activities in the realm of physical comfort; the fear of Germany has touched her spirit but little. On the contrary, worn and disabled as in many ways she now is, France is still the country toward which artists and thinkers love best to turn, as likely to find there intelligence, reasonableness, and sensitiveness to beauty, and a clear choice for the things which make the soul great.

POETRY AND WORK

V

POETRY AND WORK

THE problem of work in the world is a problem of poetry. To state the matter in these terms is to raise questions, if not derision. To speak of poetry and of work together at any time would suggest to most hearers two separate interests, as though the words brought into contrast the luxury and the discipline of life. At any time such a juxtaposition would raise the unsympathetic query whether when the worker has accomplished his hours we shall advise him to dilate his soul with a book of verse, or whether the poet should sing of the delight of labor, in the hope of casting upon drudgery some alleviating magic. If the mention of poetry and work together produces little enthusiasm, the reason probably is that we understand but vaguely the nature of poetry.

Many brilliant definitions of poetry have set the matter clear enough before us in times past and in our own day. In Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry,* the first chapter, which describes "poetic people," reminds us that on every ferry boat some of the passengers are interested in crossing the river, and others are interested merely in getting across. All the people in the world, or all the moods of people, said Mr. East-

man, may be divided in the same way. Those who are interested in arriving at ends are the practical people; and those who realize, as they go through an experience, all the quality it has to yield, are the poetic folk. There could hardly be a simpler or truer indication of the poetic attitude. A statement of it, however, can be quoted from a book already immortal. "Not the fruit of experience," says Walter Pater at the close of his study of the Renaissance, "not the fruit of experience but experience itself is the end"—that is, in Mr. Eastman's words, not getting across the river but being aware of the experience of crossing, is success in life.

In other words, the essence of poetry is the realization of life, of the flavor of experience; it is the awakening to the quality of what we see or hear or do or think or feel. Habit dulls our sight and our hearing, and the tendency of all experience is, in the old phrase, to live much, rather than well, to survive many moments without distinguishing each moment as it passes. From time to time, however, impelled by some unfamiliar stimulus, we become unusually sensitive to what life at that moment is, and such a realization is poetry —not verse, but the living poetry which may go into verse or into some other art, or which may simply be absorbed in conduct. This poetic experience may be of a very humble physical order, no more than the exhilaration of the senses after a good night's rest, when all colors of the landscape, all sounds of the fields or of the streets, seem unusually vivid; or it may be the

exultation of a Newton when he first imagines the true motion of heavenly bodies; but in either case whether the experience realized is of the senses or of the mind, the realization itself, the poetry, is of the spirit. Nothing is more natural than such a realizing of life. If as we grow older the ability to seize the flavor of experience fades from us, it is only because we are jaded by unreflective living; at least we began life sensitive to the world about us.

Wordsworth is the inevitable example. One desire directed his days from boyhood to old age—to have a passionate acquaintance with life. There might seem to be a break in his career when he abandoned hope of sharing personally in the French Revolution and took up, in a quiet English village, his daily round of plain living and high thinking; the change, however, is only on the surface, and is more apparent than real. In both periods he desired to live passionately. Having learned by experience, however, that immense and feverish activity does not end in a deeper realization of life, but rather in a deadening to it, he tried the other method; he relaxed his nerves and opened his heart in tranquillity for the universe to lay myriad hands upon him. And in an age of increasing activity, of more and more cruel noise and friction, men turned to Wordsworth as a seer, a prophet; even those who cared little for verse could see that happiness lay in the refinement rather than in the number of our sensations, and that the simple life was the solution for modern perplexities—the life, that is, in which men

keep themselves calm and steady to receive that wealth of experience which might be different in quality but which could not be greater in quantity in one place than in another.

Almost at the same time something threatened to rob modern society of any opportunity to become sensitive. The invention of machines, the application of power to looms, the organizing of the factory, that symbol of our latest world, took from us not only leisure to observe life as it streams by, but at last even the ability to observe it when we have the leisure. It is considered in some quarters the sign of a feeble brain to protest at this late hour against the development of machinery. "Too bad that life shouldn't continue picturesque and poetic and that sort of thing, but machinery has come to stay, and we'll have to put up with it." It may have come to stay, but apparently they are least willing to put up with it who have to use it; they endure it only for a brief period at a time; they show an invariable delight in getting free of it, into some other form of work. They express their discontent by demanding higher wages, but higher wages can not make them happy, for the machine has taken from them the capacity to distinguish among experiences, to realize the quality of life—in short, to find the poetry of it. A college class might judge Pater academic, but a group of tired mill-hands would hear their own thoughts when he says: "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be

said that our failure is to form habits; for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike." Unfortunately, the machine and the factory produce a stereotyped world, compel the eye to be rough, blot out distinctions of persons and things. To the shoemaker each shoe that leaves his hands has its personality and therefore its interest; each is an adventure toward the perfect shoe he will some day make. In the factory, however, the perfection sought for is an identical quality in all the shoes. When Wordsworth found joy in the "mighty sum of things forever seeking" he assumed that the innumerable experiences of life are infinitely varied. If the touch of the universe, however, should turn out to be but one finger laid on the same nerve incessantly, without variation or hope of respite, we should not grow more sensitive to it; we should become callous, or we should go insane.

Even if we could greatly diminish the amount of machinery in the world, we should not thereby, with any certainty, diminish drudgery or the callousness that monotony induces. So much at least should be said on behalf of the machine advocates. Doubtless the woman who made garments by hand often missed the poetry of life as she plied her needle, and the first news of a sewing-machine was to her the tidings of leisure and release. Even for those women who do not earn their living by sewing, it would be foolish to deny that the sewing-machine has proved indeed a use-

ful instrument, a means of escape from fatigue. But when we see the men and women at their machines in a sweat-shop, we question whether the mechanical invention was a blessing or a snare. The inventor thought he had solved a problem for humanity, but the solution brought a new world into being, with problems of its own.

In America we have become exponents of efficiency and prophets of scientific management. Certainly there is no reason why in some good sense all work should not be efficient, nor why whatever must be managed at all should not be managed scientifically; but when we reflect on the large possibility of loss in what we call efficiency, and the not inconsiderable element in scientific management which is really unscientific, we find it easy to be pessimistic or even cynical. Many waste motions in all labor can be saved by forethought; it is better, for example, that the bricklayer should have the bricks on a table near the level at which he works than that he should stoop to the ground for every brick. So far without question scientific management confers blessing upon us. But this diminution of drudgery does not in itself make the bricklayer's toil more interesting. There is nothing in efficient management, so far, to teach him the meaning of the house he puts up, or to make it in any way his personal concern. Moreover, scientific management goes further and suggests that labor, which once was varied, should be subdivided and thereby made monotonous; that one man should give all his time—liter-

ally all his life—to a single motion or to a very brief series of motions. At this point we begin to talk of the maximum product from the point of view of the producer, but from the point of view of the laborer we begin to think of hell. We are not surprised when several passages in Taylor's book on scientific management advise us that for certain kinds of work we should seek a man of dull intelligence or of no intelligence at all, since a finer brain would be wasted on such drudgery. From the point of view of the employer this may be good sense, but what shall we think of it from the point of view of those to whom it seems unfortunate that any of the human race should remain dull or brutish, or should be set to work which will make or keep them so?

It would be profitable to know what Europeans think of us, in this matter of the poetry of life. They will grant that we are idealists. But idealism and poetry are not quite the same thing. Although the European credits us with generous purposes, and applauds our execution of them, he will not altogether admit that we get the flavor of our energy as we exercise it, nor that we realize emotionally or intellectually the bearings of our own good intentions. We are becoming a bit mechanical, he feels, even in our virtues; we care more for efficiency than for life. At the end of the war, a report on industrial conditions in the United States was made by a labor commission to the government of a small country allied with us. The condition of the small country at that moment was so

wretched that any American would have said his own land was, in comparison, absolutely happy. Yet the report, based upon interviews with laboring men and employers here, and upon inspection of many of our industrial centers, concluded that Europe had quite as much to avoid as to imitate in our devotion to efficiency. Monsieur Brieux has said as much for the French opinion of us in *Les Americains Chez Nous.* In significant phrases the French working man gives the American employer some comments on our industrial system. "Economy of effort, maximum product, Taylorism, as you say. . . . I call it terrorism. . . . You must stand in front of a machine and obey it, wait on it. . . . Tick, tick, tick, steady as clock-work, always driving on, driving on, driving on. It never gets tired; it is steel, it can't think. . . . And you must obey it and move with it. . . . If you miss once, it rings a bell, and registers your failure. I tell you, it is madness. . . . It is humiliating. You feel that if you are there at all, it is only because the engineers have not yet discovered how to replace you by a more efficient connecting-rod or spring. . . . Each nation has its own character. In France the workman likes to know what he is doing; he likes sometimes to flirt with his work, as it were; he has pride in doing well, he has the pleasure of trying to do better. When you've finished a job, you caress it with your hand, and you say: 'It's done, sure enough: it will do as it is; but I'll give it just a touch here and there.'"

Not every American will agree that Monsieur Brieux has portrayed us correctly, sympathetic though he is, but he has indicated for us what are the ideals of his own countrymen. Not all nations, fortunately, have been swept into the maelstrom of unreflecting activity. France is the notable instance of a whole people preferring the poetic experience even at the cost of commercial advancement and physical luxury. There is a profound reason, therefore, why poets and artists from the rest of the world should make their pilgrimage to this one land where life is still lived simply and, as far as the outer eye can see, quietly, but where spiritual and intellectual excitement is most intense and most refined. Indeed, France is to-day a challenge to the other nations, and especially to the United States and to Great Britain, an incarnate question whether any place shall be left in the world for a people who would rather live simply and poetically than efficiently and monotonously. If the American or the Englishman does not find himself comfortable in France, he need not go there; but he ought to observe that the Frenchman finds our superior railways, elevators and bathrooms but an inadequate substitute for that higher kind of convenience which he has left at home—the privilege of enjoying the moments of existence as they pass, and of selecting from them the experiences which have meaning.

Shall we say that the United States is not France, and that with us the question of poetry in our lives is an academic rather than a vital issue? In our work-

men, at least, it begins to become vital. They feel very much as the French workman does; they do not like a mechanical life; they have insisted on leisure, and they will insist on more of it. Not among the workmen but among the employers must you look for the difference between the French and the American points of view. The French employer still respects the workman's desire to be a craftsman, an artist, a maker, rather than a "hand." Until the American employer understands and encourages this desire, we can not be happy again in our work, nor can he be happy in his—for he, too, alas, has missed for the most part the poetry of life. And if we have more leisure, we must have the means and the training for spending it poetically, not on the pleasures which pass the time, but on those which give quality and distinction to each fragment of time as it passes.

Here is a gigantic task in education. It is worth our while to plead for more attention to it, for the sake of poetry, or, if the word "poetry" still frightens the practical, then for the sake of a better kind of efficiency; for if all spiritual meaning departs from the labor of the moment, if we are allowed or encouraged to ignore the far-off end to which that labor contributes, we shall become desperate even to the point of starving before we will work at all.

AMERICAN ARISTOCRACY

VI

AMERICAN ARISTOCRACY

We talk of democracy, but perhaps after all the thing is far from us. We are aristocrats. Not by birth, you say—but birth has little to do with it; we all enjoy a standard share of ancestry. Aristocracy is rather a moral satisfaction, a state of mind. It is the sense of having made a choice, and of having chosen the best. All saints have this sense, and all martyrs; it is what carries them through. Strangely enough, all true democrats have it, and all radicals; it is what makes them difficult to get on with. And all Americans have it.

The first local ancestor of each of us came over here from somewhere; he had a realistic turn for choosing the best, and he probably was conscious of merit. It takes courage to uproot yourself from an old home, and it takes vision to know where to go, once you are uprooted. What must this feeling of aristocracy be in a nation whose entire citizenship began, for each family line, as the result of choice? Among the peoples of the earth we are in this respect unique. The sense of having chosen the best, which came to our ancestors by experience, we keep fresh in us by habit and conceit. We need not try to ex-

plain otherwise our modern Puritanism, the well-intended but exaggerated moral bias in our national consciousness, which seems to persist without relation to our national conduct. It is as though we said, to whom much is given much is permitted in the way of good will, and quite as a matter of course the American accepts the mission of conferring upon others the light his happy choice has shed upon his days. He accepts it the moment he feels himself to be, by any definition, an American; before the immigrant has his foot on the deck we are there to uplift him, but still earlier he has resolved to uplift us. All Americans, therefore, may be said to have at bottom one harmonious point of view, and though we do call one another conservatives or radicals, skeptics or believers, such terms express only the strategy of our benevolence, without separating or distinguishing us in the slightest; we all look for the mote in our brother's eye not really to criticize but for the pleasure of operating on him.

The American likes his aristocracy to be of recent origin, so that choice may still seem to be a stronger factor in it than habit. Lincoln said that those should first be enslaved who think they ought to be slaves, and we hold that those ought to be aristocrats who choose their aristocracy for themselves. In fact, we like to forget that though the aristocratic sense begins in a choice of some sort, it survives in a tradition—whether the tradition is so ancient, as in the Old World, that its birth is forgotten, or so recent, as with us, that it is still proudly remembered. We are more

interested in the beginning of virtue than in its continuity. It ought to follow, then, that we hold in particular esteem those founders of the nation whose aristocracy was at the time of recent origin, and who first taught us by their example to make American choices in our modes of life, both private and public. Strangely enough, however, we do not greatly esteem our first aristocrats, but prefer to ignore them, and this inconsistency, properly understood, may explain why we do not make upon others the aristocratic impression we make upon ourselves. We even turn upon our remote elders, and reproach them for the virtues which in a contemporary would be admirable. We say, for example, that Lincoln was one of the people, but that Washington was an aristocrat—by which we mean no compliment. As a matter of fact, the Father of His Country was more of a pioneer, far more of a frontiersman, than Lincoln. We do not like Washington, to put it plainly; he makes us feel uncomfortable. Our eloquence as we celebrate his birthday each year is darkened by a half-suspicion that however majestic may have been his part in our national adventure, and however great the loss to the country when time removed him to his immortality, we should be rather put out if at this late hour he reappeared. It is of course an embarrassment in piety to feel relieved that your great ones are gone. The worship of a Cromwell, a Milton, a Joan of Arc, begins with the wish that they were living at this hour. We often hear the devout prayer that Lincoln were with us, or that

we had another Lincoln. One Washington, however, seems to be enough.

The fact is, we illustrate on a large scale the disadvantages as well as the advantages of being what is called revolutionary—that is, of having made an aristocratic choice. The choice of the best implies the rejection of something else, which may not in itself be bad, which may even be precious, but which must be sacrificed if we prefer an alternative. Of course, it is the sense of having chosen the best, not the sense of having rejected something, which provides the moral satisfaction of aristocracy; for this reason the ideal revolutionary is one who having enjoyed a long acquaintance with the best things, a hereditary aristocracy, if you wish, knows what is best when he starts to choose it. But since the choice even of the best involves the rejection of something else, and since not all of us have had sufficient training in the choice of the best, we may come to justify what we suppose to be aristocracy by what we have rejected, not by what we have chosen. This kind of superiority, once assumed, grows rapidly upon us; our moral satisfaction is confused or inverted, so that the more of life we cut ourselves off from, the stronger becomes our courage and our good will.

Mr. Santayana has brilliantly described the general case of which we are specific examples. "The life of reason," he says, "is a heritage, and exists only through tradition. Half of it is an art, an adjustment to an alien reality, which only a long experience can teach;

and even the other half, the inward inspiration and ideal of reason, must be also a common inheritance in the race, if people are to work together or so much as to understand one another. Now the misfortune of revolutionists is that they are disinherited, and their folly is that they wish to be disinherited even more than they are. Hence, in the midst of their passionate and even heroic idealisms, there is commonly a strange poverty in their minds, many an ugly turn in their lives, and an ostentatious vileness in their manners. They wish to be the leaders of mankind, but they are wretched representatives of humanity. In the concert of nature it is hard to keep in tune with one's self if one is out of tune with everything. . . . On the other hand—who can honestly doubt it?—the rebels and individualists are the men of direct insight and vital hope."

That is our case, put rather strongly. We have the temperament of aristocracy, but not the equipment. We have the vital hope; perhaps we have the direct insight. But perhaps also we suspect that Washington, were he to revisit us, would observe a strange poverty in our minds, many an ugly turn in our lives, and an ostentatious vileness in our manners. That is why we can do without him.

Yet there are moments, be it said, when we do not simply ignore the giants of our first days; we sometimes are tempted to inquire into our uneasiness at the thought of them, and to seek a reason why we lack the equipment that should go with our temperament. If

aristocracy is the sense of having chosen the best, by what means, we ask, do men discover what is the best? At least one general answer is easy and true—we arrive at this discovery through knowledge, or through intelligence, or through both. Knowledge, the fruit of experience and of reflection, depends largely upon memory. Intelligence is the ability to see what is under our nose—a rare ability, depending less on memory than on sight and imagination. By knowledge a nation might be faithful to what is best, if what is best had been illustrated in its history from time to time, and if it still remembered those episodes; or it might come at the best through intelligence, by observing what choices were really open to it at the moment, and by foreseeing the consequences of those choices. Since memory without intelligence is only a kind of momentum, and since intelligence without experience is a vacant sort of vision, a universal stare, the two kinds of ability must unite to discover what is best; but in our moments of self-examination we divide them, to consider in what details our equipment for aristocracy falls short.

One of our patron saints told us the other day that history is bunk. How much history he was master of before he formed that devastating opinion we do not know, but as far as his countrymen are concerned he might have qualified as an expert with less than any amount of knowledge he may have. Memory of things past, discriminating reflection upon them—we do not ask this of our neighbors, and they do not expect it

of us. Not that we are credulous when our public men sometimes venture upon an historic gesture, or when a candidate for office invokes the glorious record of his party. We usually suspect that he has got his history wrong, but not being sure of it ourselves, we can understand his shakiness. We get his idea, and that is all we care about. Recently we were all concerned over the horrors of war, and we should like to prevent their return, but we feel little urge to find out the various causes of war in the past. It is enough to utter the one formula on the subject which expresses our love of peace; it is enough to say that the army should be cut down and perhaps abolished. If you say that, you can continue in the same breath to advise an increase in the navy, and yet retain your reputation as a pacifist. And so long as you are for doing away with armies, no good American is likely to ask you whether there are not other causes of war, and whether the traditional smallness of the American army has not uniformly failed to keep this peace-loving nation out of a fight. Certainly no American is likely now to remind you that our past wars were not merely defensive—that our fathers were proud to think of them as in some sort of a crusade. The Revolution was not precipitated by the size of a Colonial army, nor for that matter by the size of the British forces. The Civil War did not explode from the militarism of the North or of the South. It wasn't our preparedness that took us into the Spanish War. Our history, if we cared to notice it, would suggest that other causes of war

are present in our civilization, in our economic position, and in our temperament; against those causes also we should take precautions.

Of course we can not expect knowledge from the illiterate, and more of us than we guess are practically illiterate. Some of us have never learned to read; some of us have once learned but in time have forgotten; and most of the rest of us know how to read, but rarely do it. These groups, especially the last, comprising the majority of our countrymen, though innocent of history are yet possessed of such keenness of sight, of such good sense, as to seem often highly intelligent; but lacking a fund of experience for their sense to operate on, they sometimes exercise their keenness of sight where there is nothing worth seeing. They have not perhaps discovered what is best, but they have observed themselves. In comparison with that vision, the history they do not know seems to them stale and unprofitable.

But what about our literates, our intellectuals, the sifters and conservatives of our culture? In general they make no larger use of history than the non-reading groups. They often refer to our past, either to criticize it or to defend it, but the references, no matter how frequent, are prudently vague and meager, as in the examination paper of the unprepared. In recent years we have talked much of the Pilgrim Fathers, and simultaneously we have discussed with some heat the communistic experiments now progressing in Russia. No connection has been established between the

Pilgrims and the Soviet, except by the occasional orator who has urged us to pay less attention to the Russian heretics and more to the Puritan pioneers. Yet if the cardinal moments of American history were of even moderate interest to American thinkers, advanced or conservative, we might have expected both sides to draw conclusions from the society first established in New England—an out-and-out communistic state. The extreme radicals might have reminded us that the Pilgrim Fathers, rather than the Soviet, were their model. The conservatives might have pointed out how quickly and conclusively the experiment in the Plymouth Colony failed. It seems, however, that both sides took the Pilgrims for granted, and no one had read Governor Bradford's account of that venture in ideal cooperation, and of the reasons for giving it up. "The experience that was had in this common course and condition, tried sundry years, and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanity of that conceit of Plato's and other ancients, applauded by some of later times—that the taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing. . . . For this community, so far as it was, was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much employment, that would have been to their benefit and comfort. For the young men that were most fit for labor and service did repine that they should spend their time to work for other men's wives and children without any recompense. The strong, or man of parts,

had no more in division of victuals and clothes than he that was weak and not able to do a quarter the other could. This was thought injustice. The aged and graver men to be ranked and equalized in labors and victuals, clothes, etc., with the meaner and younger sort, thought it some indignity and disrespect unto them. And for men's wives to be commanded to service for other men, as dressing their meat, washing their clothes, etc., they deemed it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brook it. Let none object this is man's corruption and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all have this corruption in them, God in His wisdom saw another course fitter for them."

Even if we are ill-equipped in the knowledge of the past, we might flatter ourselves with the thought of our intelligence, our ability to see present things in some sort as they are. It is probable that many of the non-reading classes, particularly those incapable of reading, have kept a natural keenness of observation, or have even improved it in the humble fields where it can be an exclusive guide. But among more sophisticated Americans it is not too much to say that intelligence, as we have here defined it, is on the decline. Perhaps we see as much as we saw, but we do not trust our sight in the old way; having less knowledge than we should have, we are given to theories and are become skeptical as to facts. Our best excuse is to say that we are too good-natured—that it is after all a good instinct that has led us

astray. Perhaps. We wish to keep the universe open, as we say, and our minds open as well, and therefore we hesitate to condemn any neighbor's point of view too harshly, even though it is idiotic or otherwise indefensible; we are almost ready to concede that no point of view is indefensible. It may be that in order to practise this charity continuously, we have permitted ourselves not to dwell on those aspects of life which refuse, as it were, to meet our charity halfway. Whatever the reason, the fact rooted in the earth before us has no charm to rival the theory which happens to be in the air. In the older generation Emerson, though the gentlest of philosophers, had always the genius for seizing on fact, even in the midcareer of his optimistic reveries. The Brook Farm experiment was the outcome of the transcendental doctrine he preached, but he would take no part in it, for he had learned on inquiry that the soil of the Roxbury farm was poor, and he saw no reason for trying out a philosophy on poor soil. Alcott, however, found the Brook Farmers worldly and lacking faith, because they had engaged with them one man who knew something about farming; he therefore established a comunity of his own at Fruitlands, which, but for the rescue by kindly neighbors, would have come to a fatal end. We have made Alcott rather than Emerson our forerunner in intelligence—not that we know much about either philosopher, but in a modest way and by instinct we too ignore experience, feed our soul on our own Orphic sayings, and shut our eyes,

Our present conduct in international affairs may well prove, when later we look back upon it, a large example of our poverty in knowledge and in intelligence. Our sense of aristocracy is particularly strong at the moment; there is little question that most of us, when we give thought to the matter at all, are satisfied that we have chosen for the best, in this day when many choices are open to us. We do not realize —can it be that we do not care?—just how our virtues look to other eyes than our own. If we used our memory, we should recall that our chief grievance against Prussia, a while ago, was a certain arrogance of manner, a certain indifference to the sensibilities of others, a certain disposition to have one's own way. We used to remark that such manners mean few friends, or none at all, and at last many enemies, and war. It does not seem to occur to the American people now that to other countries we are exhibiting the Prussian manner, the indifference, the selfishness, the insolence. The individual American is kind enough, and individually we have tried to show our friendship toward Europe and toward the Orient, but the individual Prussians, too, had humane virtues. We fought not them, we said, but their government. We may get what comfort there is from the reflection that if an exasperated world rises against us, it will be of course against our government, not us.

Even if we had the knowledge and the intelligence to choose the best, have we any training in making a choice? Our country is getting to have a

reputation for slowness in arriving at any important decision. We do not object if the outsider kindly suggests that the delay comes from the size of the country and the need for us all to master the subject thoroughly. The picture of our country plunged in studious meditation is premature. But even if we were all meditating, the chief reason for the delay may be that we are losing the art of making any choice. Our institutions are now so paternalistic—our educational, social and political institutions—that we are daily trained to make no decision, but to accept what is prepared for us. We have arrived at this condition, not because some tyrants have seized control of us, but because liberty is burdensome and making choices is a great strain on mind and character. We should rather be controlled than not. Of course we are sorry that when other nations are agreeing to ideas that once were ours, that once were our chief honor, ideals of reason and of free discussion among us all, to replace the old instinctive resort to force—we are sorry that by a series of events we did not entirely foresee we seem to be standing outside the generous agreement, almost as though we did not subscribe to it. But there is no sign yet that we have the energy or the decision of character to do something about it.

The sense of having chosen the best! Though we dislike to choose, and though we are unprepared to choose well, at least the flattering sense remains to us. It appears that we are ripe for reform. We need take

no steps in the matter, if we prefer not to; from the history we rarely listen to comes a suggestion that fate may provide for us in her own way the reform we need. Yet for those who to any degree have faith in man's capacity to learn and to be wise, it is hard to leave the whole matter to fate. Anything else we may have learned is of small account if we have not trained ourselves to distinguish kind from unkind behavior, and a decent respect for the opinions of mankind from the assumption that wisdom will die with us. It is not too much to ask of us that we should see the peril our national conduct is bringing us into, and protest while it may yet be time. Or if it is already too late, yet we owe it to our civilization to protest none the less against the conceit and the ignorance which we should easily enough detect and detest in another people. Our discussions of educational theory, our talk of the quarrel between the younger and the older generations, our disputes between schools of science or art or theology—what are they all, that we should dwell on them for a moment, if the whole Western civilization, put by an accident into our hands for safe-keeping, should by our recklessness suffer or be broken or destroyed.

NOTES ON THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

VII

NOTES ON THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

1

THE TRAVELING AMERICAN

History records no parallel to our habit of revisiting ancestral places. If the Romans were the road-builders, we are the road-users of the world, and we like best to use the roads over which our fathers brought the household to whatever spot we now call home. Our voyage of discovery is inverted; we are looking for what we call an old country, and in a sense we create what we are seeking, for our presence in large numbers and on such an errand compels Europe every summer to be conscious of itself, to stand on exhibition, and to play simultaneously museum-keeper and work of art. The effect of all this on world-psychology is probably greater than we realize. The influence of our tourists on the mind of Europe may interest future students of international politics. Annihilate us altogether, and imagine the difference; think of a Europe into which no American came, for ten or twenty years. From the point of view of those whom our visits weary, it might be

a better Europe, but in any case it would be different. It might give up being a museum and go on being a world.

Just when Americans began their touring, it would be difficult to say, but some of our prophets had fears long ago that these visits would form the museum type of mind in us, to the detriment of our future as a vital and genuine people. They minced no words. "Traveling is a fool's paradise," said Emerson, and he liked to remind us in one phrase or another that we can not get away from ourselves, we can see only what we already are. "It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so by sticking fast where they were. . . . The soul is no traveler; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance that he goes, the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign, and not like an interloper or a valet."

We have not cared to act on Emerson's advice—not on the main part of it. If the wise man stays at home, nothing but extreme poverty keeps an American in the state of wisdom. But some of us in our traveling do try to make men sensible by the expression of our countenance that we are missionaries of wisdom and virtue, and the stranger within our gates

has been known to practise the same philosophy. Of course our day is a freer and easier one than Emerson's; there are no valets left, and you couldn't be an interloper if you tried. We are all sovereigns. It's a natural gift. Yet his essential point remains true, though we do not draw his conclusion from it. We agree with him that when the wise man—that is, you or I—steps across his threshold into a foreign land, he is at home still. We are never so much in America as when we are in Europe. Though our presence encourages the Old World to be conscious of its age, we are not lovers of the antique. In fact, most old things seem to us to be worn out. We are looking for ourselves, for the American soul, our demon, who goes with us wherever we go, and who becomes evident, even vivid to us, when we take him abroad. That is why we travel.

The difference between the purpose and the cause of our travel is enormous. We say we go to know more of other peoples, but what drives us out is the desire to realize ourselves. It is hard to realize what you are if you have no close or dramatic contacts with other peoples. We Americans occupy rather loosely an enormous spread of land, and our neighbors to the north and the south live more widely scattered in areas similarly vast. If we do not measure ourselves against them, it is not that we underrate their qualities, but they are far off, they are not actually our neighbors, no matter what the map says. The stimulating contrast which Canada might give us we find more conveniently in England, all brought

together in a small island, and we can reach the Latin frontier more easily in Spain. in France or in Italy than in Mexico. If our purpose in travel were really what we sincerely think it is, to know other people, we ought logically to begin with the Mexicans and the Canadians—as the phrase is, we should see America first. But we are compelled by another need, which Emerson did not understand. In order to be self-reliant we must get a clear notion of the self we rely on. We can define to ourselves the German character, the French, the English, but how about the American character? Before defining it, we must isolate it for observation. We have found no better way to isolate it than by going to Europe.

It is salutary to remember what we must seem to the European. As we get off by the boatload, eager for our vacation and conscious of living more deeply than usual, we make the impression not so much of missionaries of wisdom and virtue, after all, but of ghosts, particularly homeless ghosts. There is no paradox. Why shouldn't we seem to be spirits, since we are looking for our mislaid personalities in a world of ideas? But to Europe we are ghosts rather than spirits, a queer kind of ghost to be felt and heard but not to be seen—or the kind that can still wear clothes though the body is invisible. Europe sees our money and hears the American voice, but fails to see the American. If we were Europeans perhaps we should worry over that blindness. Being Americans, we have enough to worry about. We are looking for ourselves.

2

SMOKING-CAR

"YES, it's too bad. They're hard hit. But the trouble with Europe is they got started wrong."

"Yes, that's about it."

"Yes, they never had a real chance. You take any one of those countries with their set ways of doing things—they never had an eye for improvements. It's too bad, when you come to think of it. The average foreigner is all right at heart—by himself. Get him over here and he'll be an American in no time."

"He wants to come, too."

"Yes sir, he does."

"Ever been back yourself?"

"No. I thought of it, but by the time I had the money my boy wanted to be an architect. He went."

"They're pretty good at that, I suppose."

"Well, I don't know. My boy thought so before he got over. Now he says the American architecture's the best. My opinion is, he's probably right."

"That so! Well, too bad he had his time there for nothing."

"Oh, he says he learned to appreciate our architecture on the other side. They didn't teach him it was better, but that's where he found it out. And he says they understand life over there better than we do. I tell him that if they understand it better

and still have harder times than we do, their luck must be worse than I thought."

"You're right there."

"He says I'm not. He says their politics sound bad in the newspapers, but over there ours sound worse. Aside from that, they don't work so hard, he says—they take time to enjoy life."

"I've heard that about them."

"So've I. My boy was European before he went over."

"How's he getting on?"

"All right. It's hard to get started in architecture—it's a thing a good many people can do without. When he gets to be self-supporting I'm going to celebrate by taking a trip myself."

3

THE ART OF BEING A FOREIGNER

A FOREIGNER is one who speaks another language than yours. When you go to Europe you think yourself among foreigners. It is a great result of travel if you learn in France that the French are at home there, and that you are the stranger.

To discover this fact in whichever country you visit is the beginning of your international mind, or perhaps it is just the beginning of your mind. Until that moment you have been carrying around with you only your prejudices. If you are a little hurt to discover that the European considers you a foreigner, you may attribute the wound to some lack of courtesy or sympathy on his part; you may tell your friends—even though this is your first trip abroad—that Europe no longer likes Americans, no longer welcomes them as it were with the intimate greeting which relatives deserve. But the pain comes from a new idea, not from a change in Europe's manners. Those who visit us have felt it, even when we meant to receive them kindly. No one likes to think of himself as left outside. For some travelers, the first impulse is to go home and stay there, where the folks know you and understand your ways. The wiser man goes on into more and more countries, to be a stranger in each, until he sees that in all countries but one—that is, over most of the globe—every man is a foreigner. To

live among strangers is the human lot, and to live well, with satisfaction to others as well as to ourselves, is the art of being a foreigner, of being a guest in a world to which we can never be quite sure we were invited.

The first principle of the art is to show no surprise. While we are at home we are free to believe that words sound like their meanings, that manners wear the look of the feelings which prompt them, and that actions automatically indicate their own motives. This is the natural philosophy of stay-at-homes. In a strange country we listen to a language we don't understand, and it appears to us that the natives are engaged in a violent quarrel, they sound so wrought up, but it turns out that they were merely passing the time of day, or perhaps telling a funny story. We are shocked to see a welcome extended with the left hand, whereas God knows the right hand is divinely appointed for hospitality, yet the native means well, as it appears in the end. We observe a carefulness with money which in our country would certainly indicate a mean disposition, but which in another country may be the sign of great unselfishness. Not having been born in that land, we can never accept its ways so immediately as our own native customs, but we can learn to conceal whatever surprise lingers. *Nihil admirari.* The citizen of the world is strange to everything and surprised at nothing.

The second principle is to suggest no improvements. This is a hard doctrine, for in the face of all

strange things we instinctively move to introduce something familiar and therefore better. Every visitor who has not mastered the art of being a foreigner is more than a missionary of wisdom and virtue—he is a fanatic. Twenty minutes after the immigrant has reached our shores he is ready to suggest remedies for our most glaring faults. We wish we could persuade him to wait twenty years before criticizing us; then perhaps he might see less to mend. But when we visit Europe for a few weeks we often forget to wait—we offer our suggestions like any other immigrant. It is fortunate for the world that England and France have not acted upon the wisdom our tourists have put at their disposal; once made over to resemble America, they would never again seem admirable to Americans, nor would it be worth our while to visit them. We can hardly expect our immigrants to have the same wisdom, though it is equally true that an America remodeled in the likeness of Europe would offer fewer attractions to Europeans; but we who have received foreigners so long ought to know what not to do when it is our turn to go abroad. Plato in the *Laws* suggests, in effect, that the ideal city will permit no alien visitor to criticize or to formulate improvements unless he intends to stay and carry out his ideas. Innovations of that kind should be the work of those who are at home in the problem.

It follows then that the perfect foreigner, when he sees clearly what can be done to improve Europe, will bring the secret back with him and inaugurate

his reforms here. He will have become sensitive to America's imperfections, even though no one has mentioned them, for to go abroad is like reading one of your best poems to a member of your family; in that unnatural relation you are aware of your own voice and are conscience-stricken at every weak spot in the text. It's no time then to say that your auditor is unsympathetic, or that his taste is undeveloped. "Do thou amend thy face, and I'll amend my life," was Falstaff's wholesome challenge to reform from the outside. A fair offer, too, and less personal than it sounds. He who has the art of being a foreigner will be lenient toward this strange universe in which we are at the moment looking about us—ourselves, perhaps, no masterpiece.

4

WISDOM IN ANOTHER TONGUE

One of the impressive things about the European, if he appears in America before he has mastered the English language, is the extraordinary intellectual energy of his conversation. Compared with us he is full of ideas, he utters no sentence that is not thought out, he has a neatness of mind that makes us despair of our democratic education, and that leads the pessimist among us to foretell the immediate and rapid decline of our native culture. Some encouragement can be had, however, from our summer vacation abroad if we notice the sort of things we say while trying to carry on general conversation in French or German. We are forced to find a good verb to go with each noun, an intelligible idea for every sentence, an appalling logic to hold the sentences together. At the conclusion of the shortest evening our head aches with the effort. The next day we can repeat almost word for word what we composed with such agony and what our kind friends listened to with such helpful attention. Do they marvel at the intellectual superiority of the Americans? Whether they do or not, the wonder would disappear if we knew the language better, if we could command it well enough to talk the average amount of nonsense, or to suggest sentiments without ideas. Mastery of speech comes to this at last, that man can play with words and yet

say nothing. What seems the deterioration of the European after he has domesticated himself among us may be only his mastery of our language. Or, of course, it may be deterioration.

But no language learned in mature life can ever be quite our own. This is altogether fortunate, we suspect, for our intellectual development. Our summer abroad will drive us to the production of more sensible remarks than we should make at home in the course of the whole year. We shall exercise ourselves in grammar and syntax, in the gymnasium of thought if not in an actual world of ideas. And we shall come at familiar ideas by new brain channels, until many surfaces of life begin to wear a fresh look. To speak a strange language, even when you speak it well, is a moral achievement. To speak it badly and to keep on so speaking it, may be a form of heroism, yielding unexpected rewards in self-knowledge and in a more ingenious inner life.

5

EASTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE

It is a strange turn of history which has made the mother countries of Europe so general a cause of solicitude on the part of their former colonies. The Portuguese in South America wish to see Portugal in a position of some importance on the Continent; the Irish in America desire the restoration of Ireland to her proper glory; Canada, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, watch over England like dutiful children when the parents are growing old; the Italians in the New World are helping to revive Italy, and the Jews are colonizing Palestine. It is a return wave of the civilization which once streamed westward, an inverted colonization, a quite spiritual empire-building, since no El Dorado is hoped for in the mother countries, and frequently the dutiful sons have no intention of returning thither.

Travel is a form of self-expression, though we are slow to admit it; we adjust ourselves to ideas sometimes by moving about, converting problems of the soul into geographical distinctions. The American who takes refuge in Paris to-day, as once he took refuge in Rome, is not seeking a home—he is dramatizing a criticism. He might even find happiness if he had a large audience. The cult of mother countries also may be a static version of the same drama, an expression of discontent with too much change in

the world, too much boasting of progress, too much seeking of gold in the setting sun.

But it may be also that the tide of civilization, as Europe and America conceive of it, has at last turned the other way; perhaps we have stopped at the Pacific and shall be starting eastward again for the next few centuries. Our culture came out of the East and followed the sun till the circle was complete; if it had gone on logically from California to China and Japan, the civilization of the next hundred years might have spread for a second time as far as Central Europe. But we very unwisely outran the schedule and insisted that Japan open her doors to us too soon. Now we see that we started a backflare, such as Leather Stocking used to fight the prairie fire, and the course of empire terminates on the shore of the Pacific, not less ended because its energies now work themselves off in emotions and in oratory. The westerner now comes East, and the easterner goes to Europe.

Perhaps some deep and correct instinct guides us. Perhaps the future of the world lies once more in the continent from which most of us came. Perhaps Europe is to become the new world. Those countries seem new which solve new problems, and Europe has almost all the new problems at the present moment. She will solve them somehow, wisely or unwisely—in any case her solution of them will make her the child of the future, as Russia may prove to be. Certainly she will not greatly resemble the old Europe most of us knew. It is the realization of this fact which makes her reluctant in some countries to face the new prob-

lems; any solution of them will mean a break with her tradition. We, on the other hand, have few problems, or are willing to acknowledge but few, and we have declined to share Europe's; consequently we shall have but a small part in the solution and shall belong with her past. It is not altogether fantastic to picture, at the end of the next fifty years, a Europe quite transformed, spiritually, socially, economically, and an America which will conserve all it can of the old France, Italy, Germany, Spain—that is, all it can get of the art treasures, all it can imitate of the manners and ideals. This is not to say that the future America will be anemic or moribund, but that it will be busy catching up with the culture of nineteenth-century Europe, and that when it has caught up, it will be the oldest country in the world, if you judge the age of a country by the novelty of the problems it deals with. After all, immigration and similar difficulties, such as make the sum of all our burdens, have been known before; our favorite dilemmas in morals were analyzed and settled ages ago; our newest thoughts, as Meredith would say, have stirred exceedingly dead bosoms. We may catch up with Europe in time to follow her around the earth again, the other way around, or we may still be here, unbudging, when civilization makes the circle backward and comes up once more on the other side and has a good look at us. Perhaps we shall then seem as ancient as China or Japan, as impenetrable and as forbidding, and civilization may be discouraged anew by the Pacific, symbolically wide, and think best to go round again the other way.

6

LIFE

In the commencement season, the boys and girls dress up as if for a wedding, the elders thank God that the children's education is complete, and the orator transfigures the occasion with chosen words. It is a public blessing of youth, but still on the domestic or household stage. The next appearance, as the orator reminds them, is life.

It is a fair guess, however, that the orator will forget to tell them what life is.

The case may be otherwise in other countries, but with us there is a tendency to let life go undefined, not because we all know it, but because we are not likely to agree on a definition. We tell the children they must prepare for life, as though it were a shock, but we let the phrase do its work vaguely, and we are not too curious to know whether the young people may not have begun to live already. If they have, we regret it; such responsibility, we feel, is premature.

Our desire that the boys and girls should have the preparation first and the life afterward is offset by their confessed suspicion that, prepared or not, we the elders are already somewhat dead. This phrase too goes undefined, but no one takes it for the opposite of what we mean when we talk to the children about life. We want them to prepare, by much labor and

taking thought, to be like us. Youth persists in dreaming of a happier fate.

Neither the elders nor the young would be satisfied, perhaps, if we insisted on defining life as an art. Art suggests to us something artificial, and we all think we should be natural. Aren't these graduates the product of a "natural" method of teaching mathematics, languages, calisthenics and what-not? Aren't we Americans obviously happier than other folk because our manners are spontaneous, and our institutions—religious, educational, governmental—accord with the convincing ways of nature? And besides, art is not necessarily moral, and since three-quarters of life is conduct, life must be so. Yet it might be well for us, at commencement time, to consider the point of view which defines life as an art. The definition would at least reconcile what youth and years now say of each other; the art of life must be, not prepared for, but mastered, and few of us parents can exhibit our own lives as a work of art.

It is odd that though we think more highly of nature than of art, of morals than of beauty, and though we admit a close relation between beauty and art, no commencement orator is likely to advise young Americans to let their morals harmonize with nature. Quite the contrary. Nature is only the raw—very raw—material of life. But the orator is also unlikely to advise harmonizing morals with beauty. We elders at our best harmonize neither with nature nor with art. There was a great phrase about the beauty of

holiness, but it has been dropped from general use, so many holy people having been looked at. Of course you may say they weren't really holy; an authentic good man would wear some lovely expression of soul. You might also protest that nature in the objective sense—landscape, earth, sea and sky—is rich in beauty, no matter how ugly man's natural impulses may be. But the confusion grows. God made the world, we understand, and it is beautiful, at least to the esthetic eye. God was pleased with it, we are told, as an artist glows with satisfaction in a newly-finished masterpiece. Yet we have studied the world about us for morality or for truth, rarely for beauty. It is very difficult to find justice or temperance or loving kindness in the jungle, but beauty is there. Some of us would not go to the jungle, nor to nature at all, for our idea of God, but to those who do, we recall the old question whether the preoccupation with ethics is characteristic of God or of the Anglo-Saxon race. What a surprise, if at the Day of Judgment it turns out that God all along was an artist!

To the artist this idea is helpful. Art is not something to look at, to decorate your life with, in lighter moments. Art is something to do. It is creation. It is your best conduct. Your life while you lead it is the practise of an art, which you may imagine as an exquisite dance, a noble building, a picture, a lyric, or a drama. When it is over, it will remain in the race memory, if at all, as an accomplished masterpiece. The question of morals takes care of itself, for though

some artists have led bad lives, they have been bad only in those moments when they were not practising their art. Creation and evil, as our wiser fathers knew, are contradictory terms.

I wish the Commencement orators were telling the young people that their first duty is to be a work of art, to have deep meanings, to have the distinction of style, to be in unity and in harmony with themselves, to have rhythm and form, to make hearts ache with their beauty. Such a program would keep the young fully occupied. They might fail in it, dear fellow elders, for the same reason we did—because it is long and hard, this art, and life is short. But if any orator talks this way, encourage him, and if any school or college educates to this definition of life, send America's children there, to enter the course in the primary department.

As successful works of art, we ought to have an audience. God will see us, yes—but our fellow artists here and now ought to inspect and approve of the exhibition. Our notions of modesty are excellent for morals but very bad for art. If you have a purely ethical impulse you should act upon it in secret and ask for no reward, open or otherwise. But if you have a beautiful voice you should sing in public. There's no point in singing to yourself—that is burying the talent in a superfluous napkin. Still less should you keep silent and let the poisonous conviction grow in you that you might have sung better than any of them if you had cared to give the time to it. I know

Kipling wrote a poem about painting just for your own satisfaction and for the approval of the Master, but the poem is essentially false. It seems unlikely that the Master would entirely approve of any work directed at so limited an audience. Kipling may have had his doubts about it, too, for he published the poem. An artist is one who craves to communicate with his fellows, not through words nor through deeds so much as through that stirring and lifting of the soul which any presence of beauty compels. To stir men so is to live. Any other kind of life may be natural—that is, chemical, economic, political—but it has no audience, it leaves no memory, it misses fame, it goes back readily into the chaos of nature from which it barely emerged. And such life is brief. But the art we have been speaking of is very long—sometimes immortal.

7

LIBERTY

The graduating class on commencement day is perhaps looking forward to greater liberty. The discipline of school or college is now past, henceforth there will be freedom. The valedictorian may say that he or she is heart-broken at leaving the beloved halls, dormitories, classrooms, the scenes of much happiness; but if the parents should announce that in pity for so much grief they had arranged to keep the graduates at work another year, the valedictorian and the class might feel the sorrow of parting had been overdone. No matter what they said, they were counting on liberty.

If this is not their attitude, it ought to be. Youth ought to want liberty. But some of us who see a good deal of youth conclude that liberty is the very last thing they want. If I ask my class to write an essay, and suggest half a dozen topics to write on, and add that any one who so wishes may choose another subject, I know in advance they will write on my topics. If they hadn't the privilege of selecting for themselves, they might feel repressed or over-disciplined, but once the privilege is given, they prefer not to use it. They would have to think up a subject, an effort not needed to accept mine, and perhaps the teacher would criticize the choice, which he can not do if his own suggestion is followed. Liberty, like other opportunities in life, is an art, and no one knows better than

the young, who haven't begun to learn it, what a difficult art it is. They ask for the name, but the substance frightens them off.

We are at liberty to earn our living, for example. That is, if we know how. We are at liberty to play the piano, to walk a tight rope, to read Greek, to sail a boat, to invent new formulas in mathematics, to marry the most beautiful woman in the world. The liberty is complete—we have only to master the preliminary steps. "Even salvation is free," a wise man once said, "and so is higher mathematics, on the same terms."

It is the fashion to comfort ourselves for not having acquired the art of liberty, by talking of repressions. We are quick to imagine some dead hand laid upon us by our ancestors, which retards our spontaneous development. No doubt there are such things as repressions. A society which not only neglects the fine arts, but also frowns upon the practise of them, may very well stifle the creative impulse, and a deep impulse, thwarted and stopped, may sooner or later take its revenge. But the question of liberty begins even after we have been released from our repressions. Even in a sympathetic environment, the art in all departments of its technique must be learned. First, when we have our freedom, we immediately must make decisions. Then we must take the responsibility for them. And in order to enjoy liberty in the direction of our choice, we must deny ourselves other liberties, each with its own valid charm.

Of all arts liberty is the least natural and the most intellectual. It is concerned with methods, with ways and means. Yet no art is more humane. Ordinary legislation is limiting in its effect; obedience to it will increase stability in society, but rarely power in the individual. But the kind of law which conditions liberty is a source of power—indeed, the only source of the power to live well. Put a man who knows nothing of sailing, in a boat on a rocky coast in a high wind, and he will be a fatalist; the wind and the rocks are his manifest destiny. But let him learn how to sail, and he will believe in free will.

But he can't go in all directions at once. This seems beyond dispute, though experiments made by elders as well as by youth would indicate our reluctance to see what sacrifices the art of liberty involves. We can not hope to succeed in more than one profession. The average American is said to try three and a half. We are free to choose our religion. Some of us take a sympathetic attitude toward several creeds at once. We may marry a beautiful woman, but we can't marry all beautiful women. Certain broad-minded people have tried it, but they have not achieved liberty.

It is easy to convince the young that the art of liberty is mastered by understanding and controlling natural laws. It is easy, that is, as long as the illustration is taken from sailing a boat. But when you illustrate by the conventions in which society roughly formulates the laws of human behavior, the liberty lover may object. He suspects that social conventions

are prescriptions as arbitrary as a warning to keep off the grass; they are in no sense a record of natural law. His position is strong because he is partly right; some arbitrary element is liable to vitiate the wisest convention. But essentially the convention is the product of experience, and embodies a constructive wisdom. A wise radical would master the etiquette of conservatism for exactly the same reason that the sailor would study winds, tides and charts. We may not like them, but they are the means to the end. The seeker of liberty, especially in youth, is prone to assume that the old ways of society need only a little shaking to collapse, and if they will kindly collapse he won't have to learn them. But they usually decline to collapse, and the effort to shake them is not worth while. It is easier to learn French than to persuade all the French to talk English. Meanwhile the experiment of the short cut to liberty is often an ugly demonstration of those laws which in our radical moments we thought did not exist.

The best reason for treating conventions as a technique to be mastered is that otherwise they attract too much of our attention, and they are likely to induce an inferiority complex. Whatever else liberty is, it ought to be freedom from complexes. Nothing is more distressing in human relations than the sensitiveness of the unconventional. The average friend will overlook your absent-mindedness, or your unintentional lapse in courtesy, but the unconventional will see in it a criticism of his way of life. You make

such an effort to avoid offending the unconventional that you enjoy as little freedom as he.

Having said so much for conventions, I have probably lost credit with certain readers who wish to be liberal-minded. "He talks of liberty, but after all he is conventional." The point is that liberty is the end, and conventions or any other laws are the ways and means. To be sure, there are people who consider conventions the end; they do the correct thing for the sake of social correctness. We'll agree that they do not aim very high. But when you begin to practise the art of liberty, you have just two choices; you either master the laws and use them to arrive at your freedom, or else you rest uncomfortably on the rocks, envy those who can sail their boat, and curse your hostile destiny.

8

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

THIS is a strange phrase, unless we take "pursuit" to mean profession or occupation. Otherwise we seem to be talking of a race, with happiness in the lead. But we are really as hazy in our ideas of happiness as of life. We want it, some of us confess we have missed it, few of us pretend to know what it is.

If the commencement orator advises the young to acquire the art of life, he is fairly safe in adding that happiness will follow, if at all, as the result of that art. But only a rash speaker would tell them to pursue happiness, either as a race or as a profession. Happiness persists in being a by-product. Those who try for it directly find themselves baffled, or if they think they have won it, they have actually achieved only pleasure or comfort. Health and prosperity we may have a right to, and a decent minimum of comfort, but before we tell the young they have a right to happiness, we ought to have some idea how it is to be secured. It won't do to say, "Be good and you'll be happy," unless we promise the happiness in another world. It is only in Heaven that wise men have felt sure of finding beatitude. Whether we should even look for it or pursue it here and now, is an important question.

All the more important for us, living in a fortunate land where comfort and pleasure are fairly accessible, and where, consequently, our persuasion that we have

a right to be happy leads us frequently into a condition of animal placidity. Before we can learn the art of life we must greatly desire to be alive, and a love of life or of anything else brings with it a tragic sentiment, a conviction of inadequacy. The stories which the race has called great are all tragedies, and for a sound reason—such stories show life as highly desirable. We do indeed sometimes call tragic the novels or plays in which life is represented as altogether deplorable, but this is an error in nomenclature; they are not tragic, they are merely deplorable, and something ought to be done to improve the conditions they portray. But show life at its best, and it will seem tragic in the true sense; just because we so entirely love it, how inadequate is our use and enjoyment, how restricted our faculties, how brief our hour! It was tragic for Achilles to die young. But why? Because he had to leave a world of so much beauty. Take Helen out of the story, make Thersites the normal representative of mankind, rather than Agamemnon, Ajax or Odysseus, and Achilles could hardly die too soon. But he died in war, you say, and war is a preventable evil. Perhaps. Even if it is, even if the hero is modern and humane, and dies of old age, still he leaves us before we can spare him, and before he can satisfy his yearning for all the wonderful things in his beloved world. Men will rise up and call him blessed, but it is doubtful if he was altogether happy.

Such thoughts would not be out of place even in the cheerful scene of the school commencement. Some

of the young people will be started toward noble careers, toward masterly lives, toward everything that ought to make them, if not happy, at least cheerful, grateful, and more and more passionately in love with man and his world. But there are others who have already begun the pursuit of what they consider happiness. If the school told the truth about them it would say, "Madam, your pretty daughter here almost became a poet, but the danger is past. My dear sir, your boy has for a while disturbed himself over the failures of justice in human society, but from now on he is resolved not to worry. We give you back your children, immune, we believe, to that disturbing love which moves even the sun and the stars, and we bestow upon them this diploma certifying that they have quiet minds and happy dispositions."

It isn't the children's fault, nor altogether the fault of school or parents; it is a fairly logical result of so much comfort and prosperity. The younger generation are better nourished, better cared for, than their elders, and their own children will probably be still more fortunate. We are glad of the improvement, but it means that the young folks have a little more energy than we elders ever had, and we don't know how to direct or occupy it. Perhaps that is not our concern, but we think it is. Therefore we don't encourage them to aspire, to aim at the stars, to set the North River on fire; we avoid all the old phrases for a vital interest in this life. We tell them to be happy, and we try sincerely to make them so, but unconsciously

or not, we take away their initiative and their responsibility, we persuade them to be docile, we praise them when they are steady, we are most proud of them when perhaps they have ceased, like ourselves, to live. We do hear, to be sure, of flaming youth. A friend of mine, a fellow teacher, says he has never seen any, and I agree with him. Youth given over to riot, yes—but that is not much of a flame, after all. What we do not see is youth with a great passion, youth determined to live deeply, youth nobly discontented. We wish they might fall in love with unlimited beauty, with the beauty infinitely beyond us. In this world they would never be happy again.

9

A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

In a recent book on the future of the United States an Englishman prophesied that we shall all be living in apartment houses before long. There will be no servants, he said, and a house in the city will therefore be impracticable—and what American could be persuaded to live in the country? The answer, of course, is almost any American who has lived in the city. At least, an increasing number of us who earn our living in town want to spend a good part of the year on the soil, and on soil which is our own. We did leave the farms and move to the great centers, at one stage of our economic development. Now he knows little about us who overlooks our buying up of deserted farms and converting them into a refuge from something or other—from the city heat, from city rents, or from spiritual discomfort and loss, more serious than high temperature or monthly bills. We find it no longer desirable to live in an unrooted condition. As soon as we have bought the farm, the small piece of land where the children can play in vacation, we begin to think of it as home. The city apartment becomes frankly what it always was, a high shelf to rest on between working days.

The American return to the land is not a return to farm life; it is not a reversion to former economic systems; in fact, economic considerations have little

to do with it. More often than not, when we balance our books we discover that the simple months close to nature are quite a luxury. But we always tell ourselves the money is well spent—we have recovered something beyond price. In a dim way we know what we mean. We may be rather feeble in the philosophy of man's place in nature, but we have got back the feel of the soil, the smell of earth and rain, the dramatic contact with the seasons, the companionship of the elements. After too many miles of city pavements, after too many hours of city dirt, a mere stain to be washed off, we have learned again to be conscious of wisdom and beauty through our feet and our hands. To walk on grass, to cross the meadow through all the grades of softness between May and September, to know you are near a spring or a brook, when the ground feels spongy; or to plant a garden and weed it, and from your fingers to learn whether the earth is thirsty or satisfied—is to get back what is perhaps man's oldest sense, the sense of the soil. Our predecessors who made our farm out of the wilderness had a richer and more varied sense. They must have had the feel of rocks and stones by the time they collected and lifted these walls, miles of them between the fields, and sometimes a yard thick. Their fingers must have known wood—not only the bark on the tree, but the grain of the boards they cut and framed for their houses—our houses now. But we doubt if they could be more sensitive than we are to the smell of earth and the smell of rain. With little

or no practise we know the difference between a night in June and a night in October, such rich change of perfume follows the months; and in early June the rain is cold, yet not like the chilly rain in early November, and in July the showers meet the earth warmth half-way. In the city all these distinctions can be wiped out with one umbrella.

The very seasons are annihilated in town. There we make an even temperature stretch the year round, except for the two awkward joints when the steam heat is turned off or on. The electric lights hide the stars, and what is more important, the moon; coal-dust sometimes hides the sun. But when we go to our farm for the week-end, we are suddenly interested in the fact that the moon is full, we discover a remarkable sympathy between the temperature outside the house and the comfort within, and we are grateful for the sun. To be sure, we may install an automatic oil-heater, which, as we assure our visitors, maintains a city evenness of temperature, at the cost of a curious noise in the cellar every once in so often. The visitor, putting together the noise and his idea of oil, asks if we are not afraid the thing will blow up. We say it hasn't blown up yet. But with all our confidence in the oil heater, we still are thankful when spring arrives to stay, and we understand why the ancient world, closer to nature than we care to be, used to dance and sing when the sun got high, and poetry was invented, to welcome the sweet season. We understand air and earth now, and fire and water become personal and

friendly—the flame on our own hearth, the rain from the clouds for our vegetables, our flowers, our lawns, the water we boast of, for us, from our own well. The farmer who sold us the house had probably closed the fireplace and put in a stove, but that was only because his soul was on the way to the city. We know what we need; we restore the hearth and feast our eyes on fire. Even the farmer who first closes his hearth and then wants to sell it, knows the worth of a clear spring.

To recover all this, to have again our place in nature, we buy a house in the country.

10

THE PAGAN VIRTUES

In the first paragraph of *Marius,* his great romance of the sensitive spirit, Walter Pater reminds us that the word pagan means countryman, and that the pagan religion is simply the religion of the country. After Rome became Christian, the worship of the old gods lingered on the farms. But when the old gods were still worshiped in Rome, there had been another pagan religion, an earlier faith. The country keeps its habits longer than the town, and even within the same church the land-worker is of an older theology than the merchant. There is always a pagan religion.

And a pagan system of ethics. We are glad to reenter it when we establish our house in the country. If we should examine all the religions which the countrymen in Italy or elsewhere have held for thousands of years, we should find a quiet evolution in theology but little change in ethics, for pagan ethics are learned as much from nature as from tradition. Life close to the soil teaches certain virtues peculiar to no religion, but necessary to them all.

In the first place, man's needs do not correspond with the seasons. Nature supplies food and heat, but only during a limited period, yet we must eat and keep warm all the year round. Industry is a city virtue as well as a pagan, but in the country it must be industry at the right moment, and coupled with foresight. Na-

ture forces us to have ideas larger than our experience, since everything here is for a season, but eternity is in our hearts. This is the fire from Heaven, which Prometheus, or Foresight, brings in the hour when nature is cold. It is not less divine, though we city folk ridicule it in the humble form of thrift. The short-sighted countryman, we say, has little courage; he won't take a bold chance with life. We forget that in the prime matter of food no one can take a chance; we can eat only what we provide. "It will not always be summer, build barns," says the old Greek husbandman. Hebrew wisdom is more familiar to us—"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

Perhaps it is in this primitive discipline that we learn first to appreciate the beasts, the birds and the trees. It is odd that the farmer who rejects the idea of evolution because it seems to contradict his pagan theology as to our physical origin, will at the same time accept with satisfaction all his infallible book says about the moral superiority of the animal world. As a matter of fact, he knows he is akin spiritually to these companions of his toil, and when he has observed their sagacity, he forgets to believe they are beneath him. "Go to the ant," he tells his children; "consider her ways and be wise." Or he reminds them that "the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer," and he says a word too for the conies, the locusts and the spider.

But in the country we learn a deeper lesson than mere prudence—we come to value animals, birds and the trees as friends. The horse, the dog, the cow, the apple tree, the great elm or the oak, our favorite malicious squirrel, even that pest the old woodchuck, touch our hearts subtly; should we lose one, we should feel the loss—though the passing of the woodchuck could be born with patience.

With the sense of the precarious terms on which we are here, comes a just vision of the dignity of life and death. In the presence of death the country seems to pause. Perhaps we should not learn our destiny in advance, or be able to frame any clear picture of human life in all its stages, if we had not the animals around us, the arc of whose life is so much shorter than ours. They dramatize for us in a few years birth, youth, age and death, and they play their parts with enviable dignity—probably because they are not encumbered with speech. If they have any theories about themselves, at least they don't tell them, and they are able to offer for our study what could hardly be found among men, a wise life without comment. Live in the country, and you will understand St. Francis of Assisi, in his rapturous comradeship with living creatures and with the blessed elements of all miraculous life.

Some deep wisdom of the pagan world we are not likely to acquire; we have still the city in us, even though we return to the soil, and we probably do not intend to support life exclusively by the product of

our land. We shall therefore miss the point of view toward money for which the countryman is often blamed. Looking at him from the town, we say he is stingy. But as a matter of fact, he has reason to know, what we have forgotten, that every piece of silver represents so much life. Just so much human toil went into it, just so much food or comfort can be got out of it. If he gives it, he knows what he is giving—as we often do not. And for that very reason his hospitality is a direct sharing of life, in a sense we city men hardly understand, though our own etiquette of hospitality derives from ancestors who were close to the soil. The stranger who comes to the door must have food. He may not deserve it, he may be a lazy vagabond, but give him the food first and ask after his morals later. In very ancient times they would not have asked his name until he was fed, for fear he might be an enemy, and the sacrament of hospitality would be difficult. Even if the stranger is already fed, you offer food—in the city called refreshments.

But hospitality covers more than this central gift. I ask my neighbor in the country to let me use his saw or his mower; he never refuses, nor should I think of saying no to anything he wanted. Least of all do we keep back the desired article until the need for it is greater. If he asked me to lend him some butter, and I explained that my butter was on ice, to be delivered in the off season when he would have to pay high for it, my moral reputation with him and the other neighbors would be low. In the city cold stor-

age does not offend us; we even explain the benefits of the system. Perhaps there are benefits, but not to human character. An economic theory enables us to do many things which in the direct presence of nature seem a little mean.

There is an old doctrine that our moral strength comes from the country. Not that all farmers are angels, but that the pagan virtues are the basis of any social goodness in us. Where the countryman is dulled to the deep wisdom of his fields, his weather, his cattle, his seasons, his sun and moon and stars, you may be sure he has heard that civilization is found in cities. There is no one to tell him that he already has the secret of sound culture, that the thing he is beginning to long for may be a disease. But those of us who have lived in the midst of civilization and find it a spiritual anemia, are grateful for the farm he leaves behind as he goes to his bright danger.

11

PAGAN MARRIAGE

The problem of marriage, incompatibility, divorce, flirtation, sentimentality, are common to the race everywhere, but they are emphasized in cities. We sometimes explain the comparative peace of family life near the soil by saying that the poor woman is too tired even to criticize her husband, or that she does criticize him in her heart, but lacks the opportunity to free herself. Most novels dealing with the soil—written of course by city people—make the point that the wife has had the soul crushed out of her, and the children are just waiting for a chance to run away. So far as I know, this picture may be true, on the whole. I have met it in so many books that when I first saw the homes of farmers in my neighborhood, and discovered that the families were affectionate and cheerful, I was afraid the district wasn't quite genuine.

But though I can not say dogmatically that marriage is happier near to the soil than in the city, I think it ought to be, and I suspect it is. If you cite instances of domestic tragedy, such as have occurred in many an old farm-house, I will shift my ground and say that city folk who fall deep in love and have a noble vision of comradeship between man and woman, can realize that dream best in the country. Nothing, not even the Church's blessing, so sanctifies marriage as continuity of the hearth, from generation to genera-

tion. To be born in the same house as your fathers, to see your children playing in the fields of your own boyhood, to enjoy the shade of trees planted by men now long dead, to set out young saplings with some confidence that they will benefit those of your blood after you are gone—this raises your private love-affair to a dignity above city romance; it makes your wedding of some importance to the stream of human fate; it helps you to guess that you and your beloved are less original than you supposed, and your passion less personal—nature having included you in her program.

We must blame the city, and the modern civilization which the city begot, for the exaggerated importance we attach to falling in love, and for the desperate attempts we have made to invent a kind of marriage which would be to the end of life a youthful love-affair. If you object that the importance of falling in love could not possibly be exaggerated, you probably disagree with Francis Bacon, when he says that the stage owes more to love than life does, since love furnishes the dramatist with a plot, but while you are in love you are of no use to general society. You probably dislike the way Walter Scott, wise man, portrays love-affairs in his novels, letting us feel they are in the air, so to speak, but never devoting to them more than a quarter or a third of his pages. You can not approve, it would seem, of the ancient world, as you come on it in the Greek writers or the Hebrew; they put love-making, with all respect, somewhat in

the background, incidental to more important business. It is we who have created our insoluble problems, by trying to prolong indefinitely the psychology and the sensations proper to youth, making them an end in themselves, and consequently forgetting the great purposes they are fitted to serve.

Close to the soil man learns another version of romance. Unless he is blind, he sees every year the vast creating force which continues life in the beasts, in the vegetable world, for all he knows, in the whole solar system. He will say, with the rest of us, that in him the mighty impulse takes its noblest form, but he is more likely than the city man to realize that if it is nobler, it is because man resolves it shall be so. Otherwise the universal passion is impartial and indiscriminate. In a field across the road there is a cow which seems to be getting sentimental. It is not for me to say that her emotions are not profound and adequate to the occasion. So far as I know she will be equally concerned later to look after her calf and supply the world with milk. If we differ from such an animal, surely it is because we possess other faculties besides the capacity for sharing in the creative principle of nature. Successful marriage ought to attend to the development of those other faculties.

But we can not attend to them until we have got our minds off ourselves, and perhaps our best chance for such salutary distraction is in the contemplation of nature and her doings. Nature provides as it were a scale against which we can measure our lives, a de-

tachment from which we can see the part we play in the whole. If you watch the city traffic from a high building you are impressed with the formal patterns the ant-like procession traces; it is the very picture, down there, of a mechanic destiny. You may have imagination enough to recall how free and individual you felt when you were one of the crowd; or later when you hurry along that same sidewalk on your particular errand, you may remember how small, lost and fated, you seemed from above. Some such wisdom can be learned in the constant presence of nature. Our souls are important, yes—but there seems to be a good deal of soul in nature too. If you value man's power, wait till you have seen the lightning strike one of your trees. If love has profoundly moved you, and you have told yourself that for such divine ecstasy the world is well lost, wait till you have watched day and night come and go in the heavens, and have caught a glimpse of the divine desire.

Near the soil we can imagine a happy marriage, a pagan marriage, of two souls disciplined by the recurring drama of the seasons, and none the less kindled by the creative impulse to live constantly toward greater heights and greater depths. After the moment of romance passes, the season of partnership remains, a sharing in the happy task of building the home; then comes the season of rooted friendship, with the works of our hands about us, and the life we put forth and cherished—our garden, our trees, our children; last comes the rich time of remembrance, affection and

wisdom. Shall we be lovers then? The word seems inadequate. We need a word which included comradeship, long habits together, and so much illumination as to nature's ways that we can think of our falling in love as her wholesale device for bringing men and women together. Yet that it was we who met, will not seem accidental, after all.

12

FORM OR FEATURE

When you have your picture taken, the photographer will reproduce your face. Only the neighboring parts of the body will get in, and then only as it were by sufferance. If the result does not seem to be the entire, satisfying you, the portrait-maker will console you with the assurance that it is a work of art. He will tell you he sought to catch, not your obvious features, but the personality which lies deep beneath them. You recall that when you sat for him he did spend from thirty to sixty minutes penetrating to that hidden self which you now behold with amazement.

It's futile to ask why a photographer knows you better than you do, or your family. But why is he interested only in your face? Doesn't the body have its share in articulate emotion? Don't we depend chiefly on the body and its postures for any notion of another person's character?

We do, of course, but for centuries we have pretended that the face alone is expressive. We have evolved a set of grimaces, as artificial as any other language, which our family, our neighbors, or our countrymen know how to interpret, but which have to be translated to foreigners. Until they are so translated, the face is a great cause of international misunderstanding. The Japanese seem frivolous if they smile readily; the Hollander or the German, if he

smiles less than we do, seems dull. If the face indulges in no gymnastic at all, we ought logically to conclude there's no personality behind it. Some wiser instinct, however, suggests that it may be, as we say, a mask, covering something portentous or profound.

It would be interesting to know at what point in history, and for what reason, we adopted the theory that the feature is more eloquent than the form. We ought to know better. If a dog is alert or a horse is frightened, we can tell it without looking at its face. If a man is meticulous, perhaps over-attentive to neatness, it will show in his hands and his feet sooner than in his eyes. Photographers seem to think that hands are mere appendages. They use them to make the portrait a decoration. But if you are tired or lazy, the stoop of your shoulders, the drag of your step will give you away. Another sort of posture will indicate energy and health. The Greeks seem to have understood this natural language of the body, which needs no translating; apparently they enjoyed dramatic spectacles, though the actors did really wear masks, and the expression of each character in the play depended —after the human voice, of course—on the attitudes of the figure. Perhaps they were more habitually observant of attitude, and could reproduce them more fluently than we can. If you asked a Greek what was the posture of joy or meditation, perhaps he could assume the pose at once. We get at it, if our tastes are so esoteric, through a course in classic dancing, and even then our friends, though they admit it is

graceful and cool-looking, aren't sure we have got it right.

Dancing and acting are the gifts of those peoples who have succumbed least to the absurd idea that expression resides chiefly in the face. So-called primitive people can dance and act. But for these two great arts most Europeans and practically all Americans are now disqualified, at least to a grave degree, by the fact that our habitual disuse of bodily expression trains us not to be at home in the attitudes we temporarily assume when we act or when we dance. Our comic cartoonists indicate emotions by drawing an exclamation point or a question mark over the heads of their characters. Apparently they don't know how to draw the postures of surprise or bewilderment. They ought to see my neighbor, who has just missed stepping on a small snake in her garden, and who does very well without punctuation.

When a schoolboy scratches on his slate a picture of the teacher, there will be features, of course, but of a conventional sort, as in a Greek statue. There will also be a body, with special attention to legs and arms, feet and hands. Here, if anywhere, resides the personality of the subject. The child's impulse is sound, even though his drawing fails to excite the academies. The photographer with his head-portraits is barking up the wrong tree, but it's not his fault. He is better educated than the child; he has learned not to look at the bodies which carry the heads into his studio.

13

THE INVISIBLE BODY

It is sometimes said that the body ceased to be expressive—that man ceased to understand its language—when our forefathers began to wear clothes. If this explanation were correct, then as we wore less clothes we ought to regain a sense of attitude and posture. This is hardly the way of it, unfortunately. Perhaps the early Christians and the late pagans who tried to despise the flesh left us a heritage of false shame, which persuades us not to let our theories of our persons have any connection with the body itself. Certainly it is curious to observe how even those radical praisers of the physical, in times gone by, who fought hardest against the notion that our souls were imprisoned in a muddy vesture of decay, waged their battle in a remote world of theory. The poets and artists of the Renaissance were convinced that the body was the temple of the spirit, and should therefore be praised and inventoried with the most aggressive thoroughness. From then on we have had the conscientious but irrelevant paintings of naked men and women at every self-respecting exhibition, to vindicate our theoretical respect for the human form. But no one on that account, not even the patrons of the exhibition, will take off his or her clothes, nor even alter a style of dress. Edmund Spenser praised his lady-love in the most precisely

physical terms, adoring each square inch of her anatomy from one end to the other, and from the number of poets who did that sort of thing in Queen Elizabeth's time, and from the general praise of their efforts, we conclude that the lady involved was flattered rather than embarrassed. But just look at the costumes which Spenser and his lady wore—as remote from the human form as a Spanish galleon. Milton was the next consecrated praiser of the body, even of nakedness. Outside of his poems, however, he and his admirers dressed conventionally. In our own country Whitman devoted his enormous poetic and ethical equipment to persuading us that the body is sacred, and he named over the various parts, to defy the prudish, but in his poems, as readers have often observed, the human body does not appear, whole and beautiful, as a dramatic expression of the soul. He must have had a rare sensitiveness to physical health around him, to vigor and sanity, but we wonder whether in real life the body, rather than the face, was the language he understood. For Poe, that other lover of beauty, the body seems not to have existed, except as a corpse. Among all American writers, or writers who have identified themselves for any long while with the United States, Lafcadio Hearn is the only one who comes to mind as a natural and consistent observer of the human form. Stupid critics have suggested that he saw attitudes and postures rather than faces because he was extremely nearsighted. The implication belongs to our times—the

assumption that no one would seriously consider the body if he could see anything else. But we have only to read a few pages of Hearn to understand that his culture rather than his eyesight determined what he saw. He looked for exotic things, to be sure—he was a great lover of the special flavors of life. But still more he tried to discover the universal strains in the most varied experience, and he could read the human form in all lands. Perhaps that is one reason why he seems close to the Greeks, and why he struck roots easily in far quarters of the globe.

In our own day there is a resolute worship of the body, which will not easily be put down, not though the amateur censors and the genuinely shocked become much more active than they are at present. Perhaps we are hungry for beauty, as friendly critics say we are, and perhaps the nude bodies in dances and revues satisfy the needs of the starved soul. No question that the nude bodies are more lovely each season, as the starved public eye becomes more of a connoisseur and harder to please. But every thoughtful person in the audience must have noticed that the revues in which this beauty is revealed get nowhere as works of art. They are a medley of artistic possibilities, but they mean nothing. Though we have overcome enough prudishness to enjoy the sight of a beautiful body, we have not been able to live down our false theory that the body should be less expressive than the face. The director of the show therefore proceeds on the same general principle as the photog-

rapher—and it's a wonder he does, considering that he exhibits so much more than the head. He seems to start with the hope that the total tableau will be decorative, but that the individual bodies will be meaningless. Only by a well-thought-out plan could a director achieve so invariably so puzzling a result. Whenever the tableaux are shown, at the climax, as one might expect, of the whole production, the entertainment comes to a full stop, absolutely stalled. Here are so many human beings, undraped, to be sure, but arranged in postures which have no human significance whatever. They are the decorations on a chandelier, or the pendulum of a clock. A great triumph of human expression, when we rise to contemplate a chandelier! It seems that even the naked body is, for any intelligible purpose of art, not to be seen. One thinks of a famous beauty that in another day knew how to express itself. And not simply of daring revelations, such as legend credits to the Greek girl who rose like Aphrodite from the sea. Charles of England, in his shirt and breeches, walked across the broad scaffold to his death with such superb dignity that his enemies, thirty or forty thousand of them standing by, were hushed with awe. His face was not expressive. He wore a beard.

If it is true that early Christianity took a hostile attitude toward the body, and frowned on the arts which suggested its rhythms and its emotions, it is a strange irony that in the ritual and in the cathedral carvings of the Middle Ages we have before our eyes

all that is left of that ancient world in which poise and posture were a language. The Church alone, it seems, could preserve what it sought to annihilate. Our blindness to the body now has nothing to do with philosophies of this world or the next, and doubtless it has little to do with prudery; we have merely lost the secret of expression in our persons, and whether clothed or not, we ignore the body. We express ourselves through the face—or we use our bones as scaffolding for dry goods, and so display our taste in decorative effects.

14

BRIEF LENDINGS

When women began to shorten their dresses and to diminish the weight of cloth they carried about them, we divided into two hostile schools of thought. All the wild folk, those who could be counted on to support the League of Nations and Free Trade and be friendly to Russia, Japan, and Mexico, came out for thinner and fewer garments and for stockings rolled down. The steady ones whose life-work is to save the country, insisted on seeing less and less womanhood in every additional length of leg or arm, and they developed extraordinary skill in detecting the exact position of the garter. Particular attention seems to have been given to teachers and students in girls' high schools, for the papers from time to time have reported the expulsion of this or that young woman whose stockings were held up by the calf of the leg.

There must have been something mystic in all this. None of us whose ancestors came from Scotland can see depravity in rolled-down stockings; and bare knees sometimes go, if we may say so, hand in hand with a fierce godliness. There must have been something symbolic in it for the American soul. There still is, in fact. Some communities, we understand, still offer prizes to young ladies whose garments come within a certain distance of the ground. On bathing beaches the comparative area of swimming suits is

computed by the proper public officers. The sentiment of the country is probably behind these precautions. Yet the dresses of the women continue to diminish. The dress of the men, be it observed, continues as voluminous and opaque as ever.

This mystic question of dress excites even the scientists. One doctor, obviously of the radical group, tells you that the women have saved their lives, or prolonged them, by throwing away so much clothing. He has statistics to prove that the lighter you dress, the longer you live. With no clothes at all you would be immortal. On the other hand, a skeptical half-conservative proves, by other statistics, that though the women have now at their disposal a store of energy which once went into holding up a great weight of cloth, it does them no good, since they have to draw on it to fight off the cold. No progress has been made; an equation has been metaphysically established between the gossamer-clad and the blanketed, and in the infinity of logic Mother Eve and Queen Victoria are identical. A third man of science, bent on routing the innovators, proves that for every ounce of clothing removed, just so many additional cases of pneumonia or tuberculosis spring up. It would seem that all the lightly-dressed must have died some time ago.

Now the importance of this debate, from the standpoint of esthetics, is that neither side considers the body which is to be dressed. Some reformers have suggested that a reduced amount of clothing would expose the contours of the figure to the vulgar gaze,

but there seems to be no danger, since we are incapable of seeing the body even if it were revealed, and nothing exceeds a woman's skill, or her disposition, to give her person an unnatural outline. Besides, with each fashion in dress, she is likely to adopt a certain carriage or posture of the body, which remains unchanged till the garment is taken off. The lithe movements, the free expression of the emancipated body do not yet exist, however we may theoretically applaud them; they can not exist until we think of the body as an instrument for gesture, attitude and posture—as the medium of an art.

If we were to become interested in dress as an aid to the expressiveness of the body, and in the body as our most natural vehicle for uttering moods and character, we should be ready to understand the importance of clothes, and the principle which ought to govern the choice of styles. Clothes should be worn less for warmth and less for modesty than because the nude figure can not express as much as the figure draped. Attitude and posture are brought out by lines, and soft cloth has more lines in it than our natural skins. The flowing dress of the Greeks, such as their actors put on, was needed to develop to the utmost the range of mood and emotion. This much can be said for man's dress, uncomfortable though it is—it preserves the lines of the figure better on the whole, than the changing fashions of woman's gowns; Agamemnon could still come home from the war quite effectively in khaki, but it would be difficult for

Clytemnestra to make much impression in a Red Cross uniform.

This question of dress is somewhat mystical, let us repeat. In the care of our souls we have not sufficiently attended to it, and the Church, wishing to guide us, sometimes pronounces hastily and wholesale. At the door of great temples, in Europe if not in the United States, you may have seen a warning not to appear dressed this way or that, and sometimes a serious person looks the incoming worshiper over, to make sure the order has not been disobeyed. He is like the photographer, it seems, trying to fathom deep in too brief a moment. How can he tell at a glance what this or that person should wear? It is a disturbing question, from which you can't escape after looking at pictures of Paradise in European galleries and churches, whether those wedding garments prepared for the guests are all of the same size and style. There ought to be a harmony between the particular body and its clothing, as there ought to be between the body and the soul which it clothes. Such an identity of the inner and the outer self men dreamed of, when they told us, in terms of varying obscurity and groping, that in heaven there would be no such thing as nudity, and no such thing as modesty; there would be understanding. A surgeon looking at a body probably sees nothing of its surface, unless he fixes his attention on the skin; what he sees are the bones, the organs, the muscles beneath. It's a feeble metaphor of that intelligence which the soul desires, to

come at the essential reality, most of all in those we love. So we still play with the doctrine of Plato, that the soul does or should mold the flesh to the very likeness of itself. Not only the philosophers play with it, but the practical men, who can judge their fellows in a personal interview. "He looks honest." Really? Then honesty shows in the flesh. We are too prudent to ask just what we look like when we look honest.

But in this theory, be it noted, the body is not a covering or blanket of the soul—it is the soul's expression. Dress also should be, not a concealment of the body, but an aid in saying what the body would tell us of the soul. Short of this noble office, it is at best only a blanket such as the kind fool wished to wrap about the mad king on the stormy heath, and at its worst, dress can be a formalism in which character is entirely lost. It is vain to avoid the difficulty by choosing a uniform and thinking no more about it. In some Utopias men are described as dressing so, when they attain ideal wisdom. But before they are so wise they will have forgotten their souls, having shut out from sight their bodies, in which the soul lives and speaks.

Meanwhile you have a fair quarrel with your photographer when he admits the picture does not resemble you outwardly, but insists it represents your inner self. He makes an unkind criticism of you. He denies any harmony between your body and your soul.

15

GOING TO COLLEGE

When the boys and girls who are lucky enough set out for college the family will be deeply excited, and there will be a feeling in the house that the young folk are taking a momentous step. Our American worship of education builds up a nimbus or aureole, vague but shining, for the college boy and the college girl and for college life. There is a feeling that the momentous step is a right one, sure to make our children—and the common world—wiser and happier.

But if you were to ask the family just what they expect the boys and girls to do when they arrive at college, the family wouldn't know. Or if various members of the family told you, their answers wouldn't agree. In very few homes would you hear that college is a place for study, and in some places you would get the doctrine unashamed, that more important benefits can be derived from association with the other students—who also, it is assumed, are not studying. They won't say that college is a social club; they will be conscious that it is raised to something more important by the intellectual opportunities which the youngsters neglect. But they will believe sincerely that the professors and the classrooms count for less in the education of their children than certain other influences emanating from dormitories, fraternities, athletic fields and a romantic campus, as much like Ox-

ford or Cambridge as our American conditions permit.

At the other extreme you would meet the parents who send their children to college with the one grim purpose to find out as much as they can of what the professors know, and to read as many books as possible in the academic library. If you do meet this point of view, and it is not unusual, you will suddenly realize that in spite of your own reverence for learning you side with the first group. Anything is better than turning a human spirit into a mere study machine.

Evidently there is confusion in our ideals of a college education. It prevails among the students themselves, who on the whole always take a serious view of their own development. At their best moments, they offer many valuable suggestions for the enrichment of the curriculum and for the improvement of community discipline. No competent dean in an American college would try to operate without consulting the student leaders. Yet the boys and girls may well be a little indefinite as to what it is all about, since their elders are confused, and it is no wonder that some of them whose mental power is beyond question, grow discouraged or cynical toward the end of the course. With no clear purpose, their daily work becomes futile.

The trouble is that there are two well-known types of college, if we continue to speak in extreme terms—two types which in other lands are considered contradictory, but which we in America have tried to fuse. There is the type which undertakes the total

training of the boy, and which aims to produce not a scholar but a well-bred gentleman. The fact that the ideal is aristocratic is less important for the moment than the implied emphasis on the environment in which the boy is to be trained. If you wanted to found a college in which every side of the student would be trained, you would, of course, have class-rooms, but you would insist on residence halls, in which you could keep an eye on the manners and morals; you would find yourself holding up desirable patterns of behavior, of speech, even of dress, and you would choose your faculty sooner or later for their fitness to illustrate this total ideal. Indeed, in such a college the discipline of the faculty would be more essential than the discipline of the students; you would concern yourself with their private lives, even with the behavior of their families, lest a disturbing influence should subtract from the hydraulic pressure with which you would mold the young lives. With such an institution you could reasonably count on a high average of success. Whatever background the boys came from, you could train them to your ideal. The English public schools do it, and Oxford and Cambridge. In this country West Point and Annapolis do it.

The other type of college is found in European universities. Its purpose is simple and single—to provide a place for scholars to teach, and for students to study. Nothing else. In such a place the ideal of intellectual liberty grows up—the right to pursue the truth and to proclaim it, and the right to be judged by

your intellectual qualities, even though your character, on other sides, is a bit queer. I speak still in extremes; the intellectual life exists in the first type of college, and in this second kind society makes its prejudices felt in favor of the conventions. Yet the contrast is there, essentially. In one type there are rising bells and curfews, the attendance of the students is marked at class, in chapel, in the dining hall, there is a strong college and class spirit, there is hazing, to compel the awkward novice to conform. In the other type, the student lives where he pleases or where he can, gets up and goes to bed when he likes, eats what he can pay for, and comes to class when he finds the professor has something to say. At the end he passes his examinations or fails, and few besides himself or his family care which. His real success is the knowledge he acquires by his work, and his happiness is to merit and win the attention of some great scholar, who discerns a new star in the academic heavens.

Now, the first type of college we Americans try to imitate from England, and the second type from Europe. Both types at once. We set up the machinery for molding a definite pattern in character, and at the same time we try to develop intellectual initiative and freedom. We build dormitories, so that we can keep an eye on the students, and the students occupy them, but they protest they are too mature to be watched, and we agree. We have chapels for them all to worship in, but we no longer compel them to attend. Attendance at athletic games is also less com-

pulsory than it used to be. We select a faculty who illustrate the social or other pattern we wish to reproduce, and then we criticize the students for lack of scholarly initiative. The students piously maintain their part of the machinery, but since they have forgotten what it is for, they revere as a tradition what was once a useful instrument. Hazing, for example, was social pressure applied to the new student who wouldn't conform. Conform to what? In order to maintain the ancient tradition, the American college boy has to invent grotesque freshman rules, which have no relation whatever to the supposed ideal of the college. And those institutions among us which pretend to turn out a certain type of graduate, do so by taking in only that type. His examination record and his school history are all right, but his pedigree also is desired, even his photograph. The fact is that our machinery won't work, our ideals of education are self-contradictory, and instead of feeling some confidence to train a boy according to our pattern, we have a just suspicion that he may change us to his, and in defense of our wabbly system we keep him out.

The question is not, which type of college is the right one. The question is, how soon the American college will be one thing or the other. If we could send our youth to the first type or the second, with certainty as to which was which, we should probably be intelligent enough to choose the type the individual boy or girl might need. Some need training. Others need only a chance to learn.

16

GOING TO HIGH SCHOOL

THE development of the high schools will force the colleges sooner or later to find out their own purpose in life. It needs only a slight acquaintance with what has happened through the country in the last twenty years, to see that the American unit of education is becoming all that leads up to the high school diploma. It used to be that you were educated if you had gone to college; now, the suspicion grows that you may be educated if you have taken the high school course. This change does not indicate a lowering of standards—the educational center of gravity has really shifted, and many of our best high schools now illustrate a tendency to imitate the first type of college—the type which aims at a total training. In such schools the community spirit is enormously developed, the sports and "outside activities" are highly organized, and the curriculum is constantly enriched, often against the protest of some parents, who fear that their children are overworked—a fear which is well laid as soon as the children reach college.

The program of education with which most of us are familiar used to divide itself into four sections. In the first section—all that came before high school—the children really studied, and their progress was definite and measurable. The same condition reappeared in the graduate or professional school, if the

student went so far. There too the progress was real, and the students accepted their own industry as a natural thing. In between came college, and before that, the preparation for college. It is no exaggeration to say many a boy who had done well in his earlier schooling, and who did well again in graduate course, spent the college and preparatory sections of his education in desultory browsing or loafing. Gradually the admission to college was made difficult, by the colleges themselves, who thus put the burden on the preparatory schools. No easier method has ever been evolved for vicarious scholarship. If you wish your college to enjoy a reputation for classical culture, require so many years of Latin or Greek or both, for entrance. You get the reputation and the preparatory schools teach the classics. Of course, if your college community really is devoted to the classics, the reputation is deserved, but it would be so even without the entrance requirement.

The preparatory schools have groaned and protested over the arbitrary standards imposed by the colleges, but one important result, neither college nor preparatory school foresaw. By the time a school was equipped to teach the entrance subjects, it was equipped to do much more—it could take its students a bit further, even before they got to college. It could sometimes give them the entire freshman or sophomore curriculum. The best schools of this sort have been sending boys to college with advanced standing, and of course they have provided first rate

equipment for sports, for literary and social activities. Unless the college could differentiate itself clearly from this kind of institution, the question was sure to arise, why go to college at all? Why spend four vague years marking time, especially if you intend to prepare for a profession afterward? You will be twenty-five or thirty before you get started on your career!

What has been said applies to the preparatory schools. But doubtless this situation has been one of the chief causes of the modern American high school, which does not primarily prepare for college, and which often is a good deal of a college in itself. The one place in which the colleges have a clear vision of their ideals, is in their entrance requirements, and by enforcing them they have raised up a giant's brood of rivals. Visit any of the famous New England preparatory schools, any of the leading high schools in large cities throughout the country, and then visit any of the smaller colleges, and see what the college offers which the high school does not. The high school will have one important advantage; if it is on the way to become a college, it knows clearly what sort of college it is to be.

In comparison with colleges attached to large universities, the high school would seem to make a less brilliant showing, but this is an illusion. In such places the fiction of the four-year course is preserved, largely to satisfy a sentimental and not very alert alumni body, but the student who enters from a first

rate high school can very shortly begin courses leading to his professional work, and can even take graduate courses while accumulating residence credits for his bachelor's degree. In other words, he can annihilate the college course by camouflage, and pass directly from high school to the professional school.

When small towns, therefore, set up their high schools now, they are duplicating the service of men a hundred years ago, who founded our colleges. One difference is likely to strike the modern founders with consternation—the cost is now very great, and the equipment which the educators say is necessary will seem wastefully elaborate. There will be voters at the town meeting who will point to their own schooling—obviously satisfactory—and tell you how little it cost. They will ask why so many subjects are offered, when the three *r's* are the only essentials. The answer is that the modern high school hopes to do scientifically for large numbers what the old college did by luck for a few—it hopes to discover the special aptitudes of each student, and direct him or her into a life for which nature has provided the gifts. What could be more tragic than the discovery, when it is too late, of the career you ought to have followed? It is worth the cost, if we can lay before the boys and girls a fair vista of the professions and trades, of society, of the sciences and the arts. And best of all, to do it soon enough for them to follow up what really interests them.

Perhaps the program in the future will be in three

sections. The training as far as the high school, will ground us in essentials. The high school will orient us in life and in our life-work. Then the professional courses will remain for those who elect them.

17

ARTS AND CRAFTS

But one result of our present system, we are often told, particularly of our difficult entrance examinations, is the fortunate discouragement of some boy who wanted to be a lawyer or doctor, but who ought to be a carpenter or plumber. Assuming that the fortunate discouragement does take place, we may yet protest against the implication that carpenters and plumbers need less education than lawyers or doctors. Merely to ply their trades, yes—but would you call that lawyer educated who knew just enough law to practise?

The modern high school gives some attention to manual arts and crafts, and it ought to give much more. It is true that many a boy who becomes a serviceable doctor or lawyer would be infinitely happier if he were a master craftsman. He chose the law, we'll say, because a certain prestige goes with that work, and his family would have felt itself all but disgraced if the son and heir had abandoned the genteel tradition and become a worker in metals. They would feel much the same way, perhaps, if he took to painting or sculpture—it isn't nice to work with your hands. But suppose he brings to manual work a well-informed mind and a cultured taste. It is really a more exquisite profession to go into your neighbor's house and repair walls, tables and chairs, than to mend his bones or listen to her imaginary ills, and a

fastidious nature would rather tinker with the plumbing than with the digestive tract.

The cause of the manual arts is aided nowadays by the high wages of carpenters, painters and masons. We are powerfully impressed by economic facts. There seems to be no reason why the tendency should not continue, and the wages of craftsmen be as high as the salary of the average person in the learned professions, so-called. When that point is reached, the craftsmen will be learned too—indeed, in America many of them now are, and can hold their own for general culture with their neighbor, the business man. They now lead a life of many attractions—short hours, interesting creative work, healthful exercise. With every additional dollar in their pay envelope the position of the arts and crafts is improved. Through them, perhaps, rather than through college courses in the appreciation of art, or lectures at the local women's clubs, are we to recover the point of view of the Middle Ages, or of our own Colonial times, when the village carpenter might well be the leading citizen, by virtue of his intelligence, his sound reading, his integrity, and in his daily work he might be producing those masterpieces of design and execution which now only our millionaires can afford to buy.

In the high school, as the climax of our general educational system, there ought to be a generous provision for teaching other arts in addition to the manual. We are slow to realize that even the normal

child needs expression in music, in the plastic arts, most of all in the dance. Wise educators have warned us, but we have paid little attention. I remember a boy in school, who made heavy going of his studies, and who never got into college, because his preparation was inadequate. But one day, at some school festivities, he had an opportunity to recite a famous poem, of a rather melodramatic kind. He held us all, boys and masters, spell-bound. He was a born actor. I remember the expression on the head master's face as he congratulated him—at the time I wondered if it meant that the head master was doubting the wisdom of providence, to put such a gift in such unworthy hands. But no one, as far as I know, thought of telling the boy to prepare himself by serious study to be an actor; going to college was respectable, and going on the stage was not. And no one, not even myself in those tender years, was so absurd as to believe that college should provide the kind of work which would train an actor. Perhaps the high school will find the way. At least, it will try to discover latent gifts, with little prejudice, let us hope, against the talents which might give us a Booth, or a Whistler, or a St. Gaudens.

Indeed, the motto over every American high school ought to be one word "Create"! Everything characteristic of our life has had in it so far the tradition of building, of making something where before there was nothing. It comes of our good fortune, to be in a land still rich and still undeveloped. The mate-

rials are here. But there are materials of character also, waiting to be revealed, waiting only for a little encouragement to reveal themselves. Let us give the young people all of the old culture they will take; let us give it equally to the manual worker and the professional. But in both cases the test of our education will be the creative force that springs up in us, the imagination and the skill to build out of our own heart.

18

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TIDE

Some of us are still looking into the economic causes of the recent war, but it seems that the conditions of the next war or of future peace will be mainly psychological. Our states of mind—the polite phrase for that part of us which is least rational—begin to seem important. Were they always so? Or did the use of propaganda in the latest conflict teach us how dangerously simple it is to touch the spring of mass conduct? Or has the new hope in world tribunals of one sort or another led us to a new respect for human opinion? Or did the respect for opinion suggest the international courts?

Even those who hold back from a League of Nations are ready to admit that the psychological facts must be reckoned with somehow, honestly observed and frankly expressed somewhere, if the world is to be safe for democracy or for anything else. The talk about the war debts, as we get it from Europe or carry it on among ourselves, is an object lesson worth all the money involved, if we were wise enough to take it to heart. A legend is growing up in Europe about the debts—a legend partly manufactured by politicians and partly engendered sincerely and spontaneously by human nature, but in any case, a legend believed by most people in the allied countries. The American state of mind on this subject is so different

that we may soon be unable to recognize what Europe is talking about. This is true even of Americans who like the present writer are devoted friends of France, and who have always wished to see the debts reduced to the point of cancellation.

We meet the psychological facts in the question most unpleasantly when we tell some French or English friend that we do, personally, hope the debts will be canceled, and when the friend begins to let us see why he thinks the United States should pay the bill for the whole war. Before he is half through his argument he has probably wounded *our* psychology. A few years ago he would have seen the problem with our eyes—he would have thought of our countries as two neighbors, one of whom had been forced, really forced, to borrow of the other a sum which now he couldn't repay. A difficult situation for both neighbors, and humiliating to one of them, yet honorable, since it was unavoidable, and calling for nothing more than intelligent generosity on one side, and self-respecting gratitude on the other. A few years ago. The interval has been rich in psychology.

What we hear now is a series of propositions which sound to us like a fairy tale. The first is that the Allies fought the war for our benefit. This doctrine is bound up with the belief that it was the war which made the United States a rich nation. A few years ago our European friend would have meant only that we benefited as a result of his troubles. But now he begins to believe that he undertook the war in

order that we might benefit, and we therefore owe him something, instead of his owing us. The Allies would have fought no war, if our land had not been here, needing the benefit. If they were carving the inscriptions now on the tombs of the unknown soldiers, they would say, not "died for their country," but "died for the United States."

The second proposition is that we committed a sin by getting into the war so late. In England it is frequently noticed that by remaining out we lost our souls, and too few of our men were killed for us to recover our souls altogether. But if we did save anything from the sordid wreck, it was because the Allies granted us the privilege of sharing the fighting with them. We are now asked to remember how many lives were lost while we were getting ready to fight—as though the loss would have been less if we had not fought at all. And we are reminded by a group of distinguished and intelligent men, what sacrifices their country had to make, in order to permit us to fight on their soil.

The third proposition is that when we did enter the war, it was understood that we were to furnish arms, supplies and money, and they were to furnish the men. Undoubtedly that was what most people expected when we went in, not because the Allies had men enough, but because it seemed impossible to improvise our armies. But we really did get a very respectable army in the field, and there was a time, a few years ago, when we were praised for the energy

which brought us so soon, two million or more, to do our modest bit at Château-Thierry, at Belleau Wood, in the Argonne and elsewhere. But the legend grows that we gave money, not men, and that the money was our apology for not sending the men. What our navy accomplished is of course forgotten. In spite of the American cemeteries abroad, the day may come when many sensible people over there will sincerely believe we never got across at all.

These are not the opinions of all our friends among the Allies; many men and women have been proof against the current opinion. But from what gets said and done in public, it seems that the average citizen in France, England and Italy feels this way about it. We Americans need to study these propositions a long time, and try to imagine the distress of spirit which evolved them, if we wish to understand the elderly statesman who scolded us the other day, and warned us that his country is not for sale. It probably would have seemed to him dishonorable to say that his country had no intention of paying the debts which he, more than any other man, incurred for it; this other phrase, surprising to an American, no doubt fitted naturally and inevitably his present state of mind—his pride in his country, his unwillingness to admit her difficulties, and his conviction, along with the rest, that the United States was altogether wrong, anyway.

19

WHAT WE SEE IN THE MIRROR

We too have our psychology. It may be no more reliable as an index of pure truth than we think the European psychology is, but it is no less a fact. At every discussion of the debts it sits across the table and remarks to itself how little in common it has with the visiting states of mind. Of course, just as there are English and French who understand perfectly the American point of view, so there are Americans who agree to every one of those propositions indicting us. But the average American does not agree at all.

In the first place, he has his own memory of the beginning of the war. It was not undertaken for our benefit. Little Belgium fought to defend herself against a far more powerful foe, and so did France. We admired their pluck instinctively, and as the terrible struggle continued, we admired their endurance, their patience, their superb heroism. Whatever the ultimate causes of the war—if any human brain can ever get at all the causes of a war—we could see the immediate fact, that Belgium and France were invaded and were fighting for their lives. It was a human situation, easily understood. I once asked a middle-aged soldier in the Second French Army what he thought of Mr. Wilson's fourteen points. He said there were thirteen too many. I wanted to know what

was the essential point. "Nobody has mentioned it yet," he said, "but the Germans have my farm."

Those of us who loved France wanted our country to do something to save her. The lovers of England wanted something done for England, and Belgium and Italy had many friends. Then why didn't we go in? It has been said that the German-Americans and the Irish furnished so much hostility that our hands were tied. But the truth is that for the average American the war was a tragic quarrel among nations who were all our friends, and to intervene on either side hurt us. We had some special affections for individual countries in Europe, but no hatreds. There was no room then in our states of mind, as there is none now, for the ancestral feuds and rivalries which distract Europe. Not that we are more intelligent than they; in their place we should feel as they do, and we have our own animosities which they do not share. But we disliked nobody in Europe enough to want to fight them, and looking on at the terrific hates of the war in the early days, the average American felt that this was not his affair. He didn't know what it was all about. He doubted if the combatants really knew. He was not surprised that Germany asked the Allies to state their objects, but he was surprised that our own president should supply an answer for them, a sort of rhetorical spring-board by which the awful row passed from the battle-field to the domain of debate and litigation, where it has remained ever since.

When we went into the war, therefore, it was not

to die for the fourteen points, nor to establish a league of nations—not even to recover Alsace-Lorraine, nor to see that England got Germany's fleet and her colonies; these things resulted, but they were not our purposes. For the average American, there was no clear purpose. We at last, like the others earlier, fought because we were attacked. A burglar entered our house too, and like our neighbors we did what seemed necessary to throw him out. In the midst of the scuffle he was clever enough to ask us for a philosophic defense of our activities, and we were stupid enough to try to formulate one. But we only wanted to throw him out. We felt nothing sacred in the fight, and we still refuse to believe that we should have lost our souls altogether if he hadn't tried to rob us. Not even our severest critics say that Spain and Switzerland, who escaped altogether, lost their souls. And when we came away from the Peace Conference, we felt we had the right to make the burglar pay the damage and restore what he had destroyed, but not to confiscate his property. Here again we would imply no claim to superior righteousness. We have fought wars for plunder ourselves, as with Mexico for Texas, nearly a century ago, and we kept territory after the Spanish War, though we felt we ought to pay for it. The point is simply that when we went into this last war we thought it was not that kind.

As to the wealth we got out of the war, we feel there must be some error. We were a wealthy and powerful country before, though perhaps Europe was

not fully aware of it. We were so lightly taxed that few of us realized we were paying taxes at all, and life was fairly simple and easy. During the war we roused ourselves to great effort, in order to supply the Allies with what they needed, and to contribute the money and credits which now are under discussion. Since the war we have continued to speed up our efforts in all kinds of production, conscious of the twenty billion or so the war cost us, and of the continued demands upon us to lend or frankly to give. The individual American does not feel richer. If he has more money, it isn't because of the war. There must have been profiteers among us, of course, but there were also in England and in France. What the war did was to wake us up and to get us into world affairs. Whether that means wealth or ruin, perhaps a few centuries can tell.

We think we really did get an army across the ocean, and we believe it helped. We know, as perhaps the European can be forgiven for forgetting, that in our camps at home we were preparing still larger armies, and if the war had lasted we might have lost enough men to satisfy the most exacting standards. But we are glad we lost so few. We think it was a ghastly misfortune, rather than a virtue, for the Allies and Germany to lose so many. We don't think we won the war, not exclusively, but we were told it couldn't be won without us, and we feel that history should record the fact that we were there. Helpful as our money was, our men counted for some-

thing. But as soon as they reached France, we encountered a disposition to treat them not as an American army, but as additions to the French or British forces. Our help was welcome, but for some reason it would have been more welcome if it had been inconspicuous. It has grown more inconspicuous with time. A recent film which to us expressed the horror of war, and plenty of good reason for keeping peace in the world, proved disturbing when exhibited in England, where it seemed an example of American propaganda, to glorify our part in the victory. It did show American troops in action, and victorious in their sectors. The picture would, of course, offend those who now believe our men weren't at the front.

20

TO-MORROW'S STATE OF MIND

The importance of reckoning with the psychology of our neighbors and ourselves is that we can avoid trouble, once we know how the human animal reacts to given situations and given treatment. At least, we can avoid some trouble. There is no reason to believe that European criticisms of America will cease. It flourished long before this war, and it will outlive any length of peace. That is, assuming that the Bostonian will continue to see shortcomings in Kansas. But we can avoid supplying the fuel to turn an irrational state of mind into a dangerous hate. If we are wise, we shall cancel the debt, and for a purely psychological reason. Any nation that has to pay a debt over a period of sixty years, will forget what the debt was for, will forget it is a debt, and will come to hate the robbers who exact tribute. Monsieur Clemenceau, who has a nimble mind, has reached this conclusion before his country has paid a cent, but every citizen in all the debtor nations will eventually feel the same way, and so should we if we were in their place. England, having a higher standard than the rest of us in such matters, and much experience in maintaining her international credit, was among the first to begin paying what she could, with courage and dignity. But already the British attitude toward the debt is changing, irritation shows itself, and a philosophy of crit-

icism grows, to justify the irritation. The size of the payments will in the end be immaterial; no matter how easily they might be raised by taxation, they would weigh heavily upon the national psychology. Probably no American who has thought about the matter ten minutes, really believes the debt payments will continue for sixty years.

Rather than see a further legend of hate built up against us, it would seem wise to drop the whole matter now, and pay the bill ourselves. It would have been a privilege for this country to undertake such a stupendous burden for friends who acknowledged the debt, and their gratitude would have made it easier, but it is none the less wise for us to undertake it, even though they now acknowledge the debt only in a legal sense, by which they mean they don't really owe it. It would be pleasant to think that if we cancel the whole sum, they will appreciate the gift. As a matter of fact, however, they will probably feel that we have been forced to concede that we owed them the money. The one sure benefit to us from cancellation, is that we shall to that extent cease to be a nightmare to a large part of the world whose nerves are badly shaken, and who are living in a state of bewilderment, of wounded pride, of spiritual disappointment. They were the custodians of the most beautiful culture of the West, and it got smashed in the war. To them the war debts are a poor substitute for their former preoccupations. It would be well for all of us if they were quite free to rebuild their shattered world.

But they would only make more war, you protest. Not unless some one lends them the money. If we pay the bill for the latest European adventure, we shall have to believe thoroughly in the next one before we subscribe to it, and we shall know that money so contributed can't be repaid. In a sense, it really can't. The wealth poured into war is literally blown away. In the old days, the soldier of fortune might grow rich on casual booty, or he might carry off a pretty woman and call himself repaid, but now he is court-martialed for either of these activities. It used to be that the governments got something out of a war, by seizing territory and natural resources; that seems to have been in the German mind when the war was let loose, and in the Allied mind when the German possessions and the newly created mandates were distributed. But the idea is out of date; peoples now decline to be shuffled about with the land, no matter how august the council table which takes liberties with them. The only remaining way to invest in a war and get your money back, with or without interest, would seem to be by loaning it to a friendly nation. But if the friendly nation, having asked for the money and accepted it, begins to hate you for the transaction, and finds convincing reasons why you shouldn't be repaid, then your education toward peace is probably complete.

It would be a good thing if with a small part of the debt the nations constituted a fund to send young people traveling about from country to country—stu-

dents, and youth in every profession or business. Many of the most intelligent men and women in Europe can not afford to travel, and their newspapers do not keep them informed of foreign affairs, nor of foreign opinion. The barriers were never so high between neighboring states. They would all be happier if they could move about and see for themselves. And if they could visit us more often than they are likely to, in the present state of exchange, they might realize our sincere friendship for them, whether they like us or not—and they might like us.

Of course, if the argument is sound, that any debt, however just, which has to be paid over a long stretch of time, becomes at last a dangerous source of irritation, it is difficult not to apply it to German reparations as well as to the allied debt.

MASS EDUCATION

VIII

MASS EDUCATION

THE present objection to numbers in American education is a strange thing—the very last notion we might have expected to color our thinking in these years of grace. The war gave us occasion to observe that one quarter of our adult population can not read or write, and that only a small percentage of the young folk reach high school, to say nothing of college and the technical school. The war also reminded us—especially reminded those who had missed the opportunity—how necessary training is for success in the modern world, and how equally necessary it is for happiness in life. We remembered suddenly that education was one of the great privileges the republic is supposed to offer, and we developed overnight, as it were, a will to get learning of some sort; the young people prepared to go a little further in their studies than they otherwise would have done, and the adults began to use whatever means was available—night schools, extension lectures, correspondence courses—to make up for lost time, or to revive an intellectual interest that had begun to droop. Our schools and colleges are therefore crowded to the doors, and he

or she who now comes forward to teach anything is likely to get a welcome almost terrifying in its eagerness and in its generous trust.

All this would seem natural to our history. We are a nation of immigrants, and the ancestors of few of us left any great intellectual opportunity to come here. Some of us, on our arrival, forgot for a time that the mind has its needs; we seemed to have an interest only in the novel chance to make money and to comfort our bodies. If we have found a better wisdom, after experience and second thoughts, isn't the outcome something to be thankful for?

Apparently not. The schools and colleges, instead of rising to what is perhaps the biggest emergency in the record of education, are resolved to keep out the crowds, and the few institutions—a university or two, an occasional lecture system, a correspondence school here and there—which try to meet the need, all the greater because so few are trying, are dismissed from our regard with a phrase; they are "intellectual department stores" or "degree factories"; they encourage that bad thing, "mass education."

When you consider it, there is no reason why a university should not be an "intellectual department store"—that is, a place where the community can get any kind of instruction it needs. There are people, of course, who think that a school is necessarily a good one if it does not teach Latin and Greek, and others who feel more cultured because nowhere under the shadow of their alma mater can one learn any-

thing about the domestic arts. But you have to be pretty far gone in your own anemic fears for culture before you are satisfied with such negative ideals of education, or can be glad that your alma mater meets so few of the world's needs. As for the "degree factory," you have only to look into the records to see that most of the masses now crowding the large institutions are not there for degrees at all; those who expect to teach must have degrees for professional reasons, but the others are after the substance, not the label. These phrases, "intellectual department store" and "degree factory," are harmless. The phrase that carries a sting in it is "mass education." If it does carry a sting, it must be because we are conscious of something really wrong in our education of numbers.

Not in the numbers themselves, but in the way we are trying to educate them. Those colleges which limit their enrolment "in order to give a few students a better training," must in the end sustain a very heavy burden of proof; they select the best students, they say, but they retain the same teachers, and one fancies the instruction will remain much as before. I know colleges which have carried the "limiting" fever into the classes, and boast that they have improved the quality of their teaching because this or that course, which used to be open to any one who elected it, is now strictly limited to twenty or fifteen. Well, it depends. If the teacher is not a good one, it is better to limit the number of his students—that is,

if you can't get rid of him altogether. Similarly, a college should be small if the instruction it imparts is not first rate. But if its faculty contains great teachers, it is a loss for the nation if its enrolment is not large.

Moreover, we forget that the selection of the best students justifies itself only when all the other students have been cared for according to their needs. You can raise up an aristocracy of culture, as a sort of flower of society, but it must flower out of society, not be separated from it. An artist like Poe or like Edward MacDowell seems tragic in his loneliness because so few of his countrymen had at the moment anything like the equipment for appreciating his genius. To develop isolated specimens of culture would be a silly ambition, even if it were possible. Of course each mind should have the training it needs, the best training it can take; the geniuses should have opportunities the others could make no use of. But the moment you try to give each the help he needs, you find your school or college dividing itself up into an "intellectual department store," as it should divide; and when you realize that all your teaching in the classroom is vain if it is contradicted by the spirit or atmosphere of the student's home, you feel bound to carry the opportunity of education into that home, and your school or college is embarked on adult education. So much the better. Thus will end the rubber-stamp, the stereotype ideal of training, which now lingers chiefly in certain small places where all

the students take the same courses and develop the same taste in dress.

But when you say that each mind should have the training it needs, you have perhaps touched on what is wrong in mass education. When we see a large number of students crowding into a class it is natural, for some reason I don't know, to imagine that they represent the average mind, and that a kind of instruction less than our best will be what they want. The large classroom would not distress the critic if in it he heard a doctrine inspiring and vital; what he hears most often is a rehash of information already in print. The lessons of the correspondence school would not bother us if they were full of meat, but they are now full of platitude. In other words, we have answered the need by developing systems of distribution, but the quality of what we distribute is too low. My neighbor thinks it is wonderful that his radio enables him to hear some one singing in Baltimore. Yes and no. The distance is great, but the singing is very bad.

To me, mass education means the kind we are giving the masses, the kind we think the masses need or want. I am sure that four-fifths of the teachers in American schools and colleges are "teaching down" to their classes, giving them instruction that is often an insult to their intelligence, rarely satisfying their secret curiosity for intellectual things. Since the trouble, as I think, is with the teaching, it would be easy to go on to say that we haven't enough great teachers; of course we haven't. But those we have

could aim higher than they do, could give the masses credit for intellectual curiosity and for genuine spiritual insight into the problems of truth and beauty. To assume that a boy has a mind is the quickest way to develop a mind in him, and to assume that he hasn't a mind but needs some training in mediocrity, is the beginning of what I call mass education.

The phrase was invented, I think, by devotees of small colleges to express their disapproval of the numbers who went elsewhere. But in the sense in which I take the phrase, mass education is disappearing perforce from the larger places which have highly differentiated their courses, and it lingers chiefly in the educational backwaters where the life of reason has not kept up with sentiment for a beautiful campus, or with memories of great men who once did use their minds there. In practically all the recent books of undergraduate life, such as *The Plastic Age*, it is the college of this kind that is portrayed, and in all of them is recorded the students' discontent with the inadequate fare offered to them in the classroom. Not that they were taught anything untrue, or that they preferred other subjects to the ones they were taught; but they had come to college expecting to find in the classroom some vision of the human mind functioning at its best—not their mind, perhaps, but at least the teacher's—and they found something which seemed to imply contempt of their brains, or cynical indifference to the old romance of the search for truth.

The teachers must aim higher. Of course we

might make some changes in the small traditional colleges, to wake them up. I have often thought we might examine all the students at the end of the sophomore year, and those who proved their ignorance we could present with their A.B. diploma and send home. If one is doing nothing but accumulating college life, two years will suffice to accumulate it all. The other students, who had learned something, we might keep on for the four years, and at the end we might give them too their A.B. diplomas. The difference between the two diplomas would be much as it is now. Or it might be a subtler kind of justice to give diplomas only to those who had learned nothing at college, so that no one should go away empty handed. This suggestion I like to make to my friends among the graduates of the proud small colleges, who fear that the larger places, grappling however clumsily with the problem of intellectual hunger, may become "degree factories." Yet the real cure is not in such devices of administration, but in the attitude of the teacher.

We do not know, of course, what all these students will need, until we have looked them over. But when we look them over we shall probably discover chiefly what we are looking for. We might remember that the crowds who followed Abelard, or any other magnetic teacher, did not accuse him of indulging in mass education; though they had difficulty in hearing him, they probably did not desire to be divided into small sections and turned over to his assistants. They may not have understood him, but they had met greatness.

There is usually no fear that our students do not understand us. Haven't we anything to lay before them that would exalt the spirit and stretch the mind?

One thing they are looking for in our day which can be imparted and multiplied, like the sacred bread, to crowded hillsides, but which can not be caught in formulas—they are looking for beauty. Those who teach American youth to-day know how hungry they are for a life of beauty, how tired of ideas chiefly mechanical or economic. This world of machinery is to the elders still new, but to our students it is only their uneventful environment; we remember when automobiles came in, but they were born to automobiles. When we turn to administrative devices to solve our problems, educational among others, they think we are wasting our time over antique methods, not knowing that some of us still remember hopefully the day when administrative methods arrived to light the world. The young people want life, a fine kind of life, with happiness in it, but happiness found through the mind and through beauty. If I seem to praise them too highly, I remember that where one appears who teaches in this spirit, the young rarely, if ever, fail to recognize him and to meet his mood. If he had a thousand students at his feet, he would be an individual to each of them, and what he taught would seem the personal word of a friend.

THE LIBERAL COLLEGE

IX

THE LIBERAL COLLEGE

We LIKE the word "liberal." Twenty years ago there were two kinds of colleges—good ones and bad ones. Now, it seems, every college is good, and some of them are liberal. We observe that our own college, whichever it may be, is always of the liberal kind. The epithet would not be found so often on our lips if it didn't bring a rich flavor of satisfaction. Perhaps we taste in it the thankfulness of the righteous person who walked near the altar, that our college is not as other colleges. Perhaps to call our own college liberal is to satisfy an aspiration for it—an aspiration perhaps not entirely satisfied in any other way. But we like the word, and we use it so much that we have become interested to know what it means.

The *Oxford Dictionary* says that "liberal" means "fit for a gentleman"—adding that the use is now rare. *Webster's Dictionary* says that the word means "befitting a man of free birth." The liberal arts in the ancient world fitted the free man to live rather than to make a living. "Liberal" also means "without restraint; not strict or rigorous; free, as a translation." There are those who say that the college graduate's

knowledge of the world, and of man in the world, is "free, as a translation." But the scholar, with all his faults, often knows not to expect the wrong things of education. His studies may have rescued him from that faith in the certainty of human knowledge which it is the misfortune of the uneducated to embrace. For him the liberal element in a college course is that which frees us from slavery to our environment, from slavery to our business or profession, from slavery to the dead things of the past, or to the insignificant things of the present. It is whatever makes us at home, spiritually at ease, with the great of all time.

If the definition is so clear in the dictionary and in the heart of the wiser scholars, why should we be at pains to tell one another what we mean when we speak of the liberal college? Because, in the first place, all colleges like to be called liberal, and those are most eager for the title which feel the encroachment of the professional or technical point of view upon the older humanities. One may study the calculus for a purely humane purpose, to increase one's store of knowledge and range of ideas; or one may study it in order to be an engineer. The difference in purpose was originally simple enough. But the student of engineering now insists that the profession he prepares for is itself one of the larger humanities to enter which is a liberal education; by a natural increase of faith in their useful calling the engineers are coming to think of their schools as liberal institutions, though as yet they do not often claim the name, and

the old-fashioned college which has added to its curriculum a course or two leading to later professional study soon learns to argue that the innovation does not take away the old liberalism, but really strengthens it.

I should not like to seem hostile to courses in engineering, or to other technical courses in our institutions of public education. Personally I should like to see every citizen, of whatever age, finding the instruction or the aid he desires in the nearest university. If he wishes to be an engineer or a painter or a blacksmith, I should like to see him turn to the university for training. No doubt, as our American universities learn to serve the community with more and more completeness we shall become accustomed to think of carpentering and of plumbing as academic subjects. How long is it since the universities had a welcome for the dentist, the pharmacist, the surgeon or the engineer? Let us hope that the engineer trained in the university, in the neighborhood of the liberal college, is broader and more generous-minded than if he had studied engineering in a technical school, without the humane environment which opens his eyes to the social, non-professional aspects of his work. But how shall we secure the humane environment?

The second reason why we find it hard nowadays to define the liberal college, is the very opposite of the first. If there is a tendency to introduce professional or technical courses into many of the colleges, it should be remembered also that many colleges have stood

firm against such invasion, and beyond the shadow of question they teach nothing which would help man or woman to earn a living. By part of the definition they are liberal colleges. Having taken one good look at them, however, the prudent scholar declines to accept them as the illustration of his ideal. To be liberal, education must not only be free from that kind of slavery which comes from a too close attention to making one's living, but it must also prepare one to take an essential part in the humane efforts of life—to understand human nature, to enjoy the quality of human experience. Some institutions which most courageously cling to the old curriculums and especially to the classics, unfortunately fail to demonstrate that the classics or the old curriculums teach men and women to live. In such colleges to-day Latin and Greek are still taught, and mathematics, and the other survivals of the humanistic discipline; but the students are graduated without much knowledge of the classics, and with little love of them, and without any palpable disposition toward the rigor and the beauty of mathematical thought.

Obviously it is not the subject that guarantees liberal training, though we persist in believing that the study of theology ought to yield another sort of wisdom than the study of life insurance. The liberal college may have to be defined partly in terms of the subjects it teaches, but partly also in terms of its way of teaching them—perhaps most of all in terms of what it does not teach.

I have somewhat exaggerated the contrast between those institutions of learning which claim to be liberal although they offer training chiefly of a technical or professional kind, and those institutions which claim to be liberal because they teach nothing with which you can earn your living. These alternatives do exist, but they are extreme. If we were spared any further complication, we might even from these extremes observe a satisfactory definition of the liberal college. Yet we should have to remind ourselves of the chief weakness of the American college education to-day—the weakness which makes it hard to say that any college is liberal; we should have to remind ourselves that our college education is overwhelmingly preoccupied with our own moment in time, with our own spot on the globe, with our own private perplexities.

Is not the fact known to us all? The educational prophets have been urging us to be at home in our environment, to be children of our own day. We are told to learn the world we live in. If we are no longer directed to the ant for moral wisdom, we are at least advised to consider the spider and the caterpillar, which seem to accept without argument the station and the moment of life in which instinct and the family chronology have placed them. We have made, therefore, an heroic effort in our college education to be contemporary. To live only in the moment, to imagine only one's own place, was once thought to be the fate of the stupid. We have made it the ideal of the educated. Contemporary history, contemporary

literature, contemporary science, contemporary society —as who should say contemporary multiplication table, contemporary gravitation, contemporary solar system! How liberal it sounds, to be up-to-date! What a miracle of culture, to be interested in our own affairs, and to see best, and somewhat exclusively, what is under our nose!

Whether or not trades and professions should be included in the curriculum of a liberal college, whether or not Latin and Greek can safely be omitted from it, of this one principle I personally have little doubt, that no college is liberal which trains its students to identify the excellent or the important exclusively with the contemporary. Not all epochs have been beautiful or significant; some of them have been less happy to live in than others. To discover the principles, moral or esthetic or political, which assured immortality to Troy in Asia Minor and comparative obscurity of Troy, New York, would be to free ourselves from the prison of egotism, and to have our part in the complete citizenship of mankind. But if what is contemporary and near is always the best, then the poets of modern Greece are better than Homer, the poets of Italy to-day are better than Virgil or Dante, and our American poets, particularly those in our own neighborhood, are better than Whitman or Emerson or Poe.

Even if all the moments of a life were equally beautiful and important, it would hardly be enough to confine our attention to one of them; for life, as

the most contemporary of us knows, is a moving thing, and to get its direction we must study the path it has already marked out. To know anything about life, therefore, we must step out of our moment to observe the moments left behind to reflect upon them. This all the more, the more concerned we are with the future, with the advance of experience. It is old and not new experience that attains to the prophetic strain.

By how much one man has more experience of things past than another, [says Hobbes] by so much also he is more Prudent, and his expectations the seldomer fail him. . . . And though it be called Prudence, when the event answereth our Expectation; yet in its own nature, it is but Presumption. For the foresight of things to come, which is Providence, belongs only to him by whose will they are to come. From him only, supernaturally, proceeds Prophecy. The best Prophet naturally is the best guesser, and the best guesser, he that is most versed and studied in the matters he guesses at; for he hath most Signs to guess by. A sign is the Event Antecedent, of the Consequent; and contrarily, the Consequent of the Antecedent, when the like Consequences have been observed before: And the oftener they have been observed the less uncertain is the Sign. And therefore he that has most experience in any kind of business, has most Signs, whereby to guess at the Future time, and consequently is the most prudent: And so much more prudent than he that is new in that kind of business, as not to be equaled by any advantage of natural and extemporary wit: though perhaps many young men think the contrary.

I ought not to quote an author who wrote so much sense so long ago. But Hobbes seems wiser than

some of the writers of to-day. Perhaps a really liberal education should prejudice us in favor of those authors who are wise. In my youth Hobbes enjoyed a vogue much inferior to that of Robert Louis Stevenson; to-day the college catalogues lay more emphasis on Bernard Shaw than on the seventeenth-century critic. But he is an example of what the truly liberal college would concern itself with. He is not contemporary, and never was exclusively so. He has the power to reveal life to us, now or fifty years from now. Not for an age, but for all time—the men of whom this can be said, and only they, should be the idols of the liberal college; only those books and those ideas have properly a place there, which in their sum do indeed constitute the best that has been said or thought in the world. The student who is graduated from a liberal college ought to know Hobbes; he ought also to know Pascal, and Plato and Bacon, and Homer and Spinoza and Galileo and Leonardo da Vinci—and those other giants, and all their works, of whom, alas, the list is not too long. Even if we agree to study the best that has been said or thought in the world, some of us fear that there is not time enough in the college course to study it all. This fear is base self-flattery. There have not been so many great men, nor so many great ideas. If the curriculum is crowded now, it is because we are studying temporary things, which being second rate are numerous. From all such luggage a liberal education would liberate us.

In our study of literature, for example, we now

spend much time on inferior authors—minor poets, minor novelists, minor essayists; we perhaps spend even more time on criticism of these authors by other writers less important still. If we read Synge's *Riders to the Sea,* we soon think we must read a life of Synge by some one whose name we forget. Compared with Synge's play, the book about him is unimportant; compared with *King Lear* or the *Antigone*, Synge's play is unimportant. A liberal education in literature would, I think, teach us first to do without the secondary books that collect like barnacles around the masterpieces; and it then would teach us to distinguish among the masterpieces. I remember hearing Mr. Woodberry say long ago that for the educated man and woman this is fortunately a world of disappearing books; that when you begin with a love of Stephen Phillips, for example, you soon find him swallowed up in Tennyson; that when you know Tennyson well enough, you begin to read him in Malory or perhaps in Virgil; that when you know your Virgil, you perhaps find him, and Tennyson and Phillips, all contained in Homer. This was the sort of liberal education that Plato had in mind for us, when he imagined the soul as rising from the worship of a lower to the worship of a higher beauty. In such an ascent there would constantly be fewer objects of beauty to love—a great simplifying of the curriculum; but the beauty would be greater and the love stronger.

If our courses of literature, then, attended to the few great poets and prosemen, the courses in history,

and those in philosophy, might confine themselves to the few great historians, and the few great philosophers. There would be difficulties here, as we all realize. We like to teach our own contemporary philosophy, or our private idea of history, which unfortunately is not yet famous in the world. But the student of history who has mastered our ideas of ancient Greece, and in the process has had no leisure to read Herodotus or Thucydides, may be said to have missed something. In science, too, the emphasis might well be upon the few essential principles of the subject. Some scientists, I know, feel that in their subject every step is essential, even sacred, and that no discrimination is possible among the links of the chain by which their kind of truth is lifted from the well. If they were right, I should feel that science was hardly a proper subject for the liberal college, since a subject so routine in its processes could teach no liberation of the mind. But I believe the scientists are wrong who take this attitude, and that the peaks of scientific achievement can be recognized and can be made recognizable.

To simplify the curriculum in this fashion, to choose only the best things, would be an heroic achievement for any college faculty. Yet a liberal education would give each of us some degree of power to know good from evil, to be connoisseurs of life. I often wonder how the student is to learn discrimination from a curriculum which includes everything under the sun. The liberal college would be known by the many

things it would decline to notice, as well as by its insistence on the few—the very few—golden accomplishments of the race. In a world growing so rapidly more complex, that education indeed would be liberal which reminded us always how few things are really necessary, and which are the necessary things.

And some of the necessary things in a sense are contemporary. We should study Hobbes in a liberal college, even if he had just begun to write. We should choose him not because he was of our time, but because he seemed timeless. To discriminate, to derive a sense of values from experience longer and wider than our own, would be the fruit of liberal education.

TEACHING LITERATURE: CHAPTER TWO

X

TEACHING LITERATURE: CHAPTER TWO

1

In few countries has literature been more conscientiously taught than in ours during the last thirty years. The mysteries of poetry and of fiction, the problem of style, the technique of the novel, the short story, the drama, and the essay, have been lectured on and examined on, from the first glimpse of the first reader to the final clutching of the Ph.D.; Shakespeare, his life and works, we have expounded to the boys and girls in high school, and we have expounded him again to the same students when they reached college, and if they went on to graduate courses we have expounded him to them there. And all this not against their wish, for no courses are more popular than those in literature. With such thirst for instruction in the greatest of arts and with so much instruction in it, America ought long ago to have become singularly productive and important in letters. What explanation can we give for the unpleasant fact that in this art we are not singularly productive, and most of what we do produce is singularly unimportant? Our drama

is wretched; our novels, with few exceptions, are rather thin; our poetry, in spite of its volume, is rather prosaic; and our criticism is feeble in idea and bad in manner. Has so much training in literature brought us only to this?

It will not surprise the average author that a professional teacher of literature should estimate contemporary writing in severe terms. The professors are supposed always to blame the current writers for the slough into which literature does fall from time to time. On the other hand, the professor knows that for the present state of affairs in American letters the writers are inclined to blame the teachers. A man who has always earned his living by his pen asked me not long ago if I did not think a college education harmful for the young man who hopes to write. The question was put seriously, in good faith. What could I say? I retorted that many men have failed to become good writers, even though they avoided an education, but in my heart I felt the edge in the question which his phrasing had not brought out; the opposition of writers and teachers to-day is more than the usual encounter of youth with its elders; it comes from an essential and irreconcilable difference of aim. Such a difference is worth looking into, for no art or science is in a good way if its theory is divorced from its practise. Either the theory or the practise is wrong —or, of course, both may be wrong.

My own opinion is that the teachers of literature in this country, and the writers, are both sadly off the

track. Our writers are wasting much sincere effort through ignorance of their art, and the enormous amount of instruction in literature, from school to college, has in it little to correct the ignorance of the writers. On both sides the subject is large and inviting, but since I am a teacher myself I will consider here only the shortcomings of literary instruction, with some suggestion of a remedy—and this with the greater enthusiasm because I believe that Chapter One of literary training in the United States is about to close, and a wiser Chapter Two about to open.

2

We do our teaching of literature chiefly through the departments of English. Literature, of course, is something more than English literature; but since the Greek and Latin experts, even before the decline of their subjects, taught languages rather than literatures, and since the French and German teachers are similarly preoccupied with language, the English classes have become the only field from which literature is envisaged as a world subject. This accident of our educational system has given to the American teacher of English a remarkable opportunity, not duplicated, so far as I know, in other lands. He may teach all literature, or as much of it as he chooses, and he may teach it from any point of view. In the schools, therefore, the children read Homer and Virgil in English, as in college later they read Cervantes and Moliere and Euripides. Some universities recog-

nize this unprecedented spread of English teaching by calling part of it comparative literature, but under any name, inclusive or narrow, the whole field of letters is open to the teacher of English. Indeed, his scope is still wider, and takes in more than letters; he may try, if he will, to convey to his pupils that general culture once associated with the classics; he may teach them the stories in the Bible which once were learned at home or in church; he may train them surreptitiously in general manners and etiquette; he may guide their reading in biography, social science, or philosophy—in short, he is at liberty to teach them, under the name of English, anything they have failed to learn elsewhere.

We must pay all the more attention to the freedom of opportunity which the teacher of English enjoys because, very strangely, he does not use the opportunity to teach literature as the thing it primarily is—he does not teach literature as a fine art. His failure to do so is, I believe, the cause of the divorce between our literary theory and practise today. The teacher can say justly enough of much contemporary writing, that it is not art. Unfortunately, the writer can reply with equal justice, "Yes, but who will tell me what art is? You who look for art in my work, never look for it in Shakespeare or Milton or Chaucer when you lecture; you teach history and philology and philosophy, but you do not teach art. When you expound the novel or the drama, you ignore the problem of the man who wrote the masterpieces in

those kinds, or of the man who will try to write others; you do not suspect that art is first of all a creative work, and your standards of judgment, therefore, have no reference to that creation."

The multifarious things taught instead of literature have been good things to know, and there should be no quarrel with them; the professor of things in general may be an educator. But we teach things in general at a great cost, if with a literary masterpiece in our hands we forget to teach it as a work of art. No one who knows what problems the teacher of English in the United States has had to face, in heterogeneous towns and cities, will undervalue what he has done up to date, in the first chapter of our contemporary culture; we shall only hope that now, in Chapter Two, the teacher will remember that literature is an art, intended by its makers to be such, and that he will not be ashamed, as at present he often seems, to discuss it from that point of view. The reluctance to consider literature as art, or as art to take seriously, is as common now in school-teaching as in graduate instruction. Just after the fall of the old Russian government, I heard a high school teacher of English say that she could not keep her thoughts, and certainly not the attention of her class, on such a thin subject as mere literature when real events were stirring in the world; she and her children were therefore giving their class hours to the study not of Carlyle but of Kerensky. Her confession was something of a scandal to the colleagues who heard her, yet

perhaps none of them has ever been scandalized by what goes on in many college and university courses, where the study of literature as such is abandoned in the same way for other matters more immediate to the teacher and more interesting: biography—social, political, philosophical, or theological backgrounds; genealogy; bibliography; philology.

Not all the teachers of literature, by any means, are insensible to their false position, and from time to time they try to mend it. The attempt usually takes the form of a course in strictly contemporary literature. If anything will bridge the chasm between the professor and the writer, will it not be a lecture on the writer's latest book? It all depends on the lecture. If the professor treats the new book as he treats the old ones—that is, as something not art—he will come no closer to the real world of literature than if he lectured on *Beowulf*. On the other hand, if he knows what literature is, and can judge it from the creating point of view of the author, then his remarks will be equally vital, whether he speaks of *Beowulf* or of a new book. For obviously it is the teacher's point of view that brings him close to the artist, or separates them; the date of the text he lectures on has nothing to do with it. Courses in contemporary literature may as well be given—why not?—but they will not cure a bad philosophy in the teacher, and after all, they will prove no more contemporary than a course in older good books, since the living things of art are always timely.

A few teachers not only see the difficulty, but have solved it correctly, so far as their own work is concerned. They are often looked at askance by their colleagues, as having indulged in a treacherous levity. For many years Professor Brander Matthews has preached, in season and out, that the acted drama can be properly studied only in action, on the stage. The dramatic museum which he collected at Columbia is an illuminating comment on the printed text of Æschylus or Shakespeare or Moliere, and to even the layman who has seen it, and certainly to the professional dramatist, there seems no other way to understand what the great artists accomplished, and how they accomplished it, than by examining the conditions they had to face. Yet to take the creative point of view is so difficult for some of us that the name of scholarship is usually denied to the kind of knowledge one can acquire in the dramatic museum: "to know only that," say the wise, "is to know no more about the theater than a dramatist knows." Those of us who believe that literature is an art, hold that to know what Shakespeare or Moliere or any later dramatist knew about the theater, is to know enough for the understanding of his works. I speak of those who wish merely to understand, as well as of those who hope also to practise the art. Of course the playwright and the actor must learn their art on the stage. But the audience, the reader, the critic, must study in the same conditions if they are to have any correct knowledge of the art they enjoy.

3

Why has not the imparting of this knowledge been the chief aim of our teachers of literature? For reasons natural enough they have been content to teach the various races of Americans one common language —how in a general way to read it, pronounce it and spell it. Their object, also excellent in itself, has been to introduce their pupils not to art but to citizenship. The standards they set up are social and economic, not esthetic. "How ashamed you'll be, Tommy, when you grow up to be a man and pronounce that word wrong!" or, "You'll never get a job, Eddie, if you don't learn to write a well-spelled letter."

Something better might be expected in the classes where the students read instead of write—where they escape from their own inarticulateness to the eloquence of Thackeray, of Dickens, of Hawthorne. But in these courses, too, the purpose of the teaching, however admirable, is utilitarian; it is to furnish one more kind of insurance against embarrassment in polite society. Any person ought to know who Milton was, when Shakespeare lived, why Byron wrote. When we wish to indicate no culture in our neighbors, we tell anecdotes to show that they lack this sort of information. However this ideal of knowledge may recommend itself in the laboratory, it is useless in the field of art.

If a boy knows *Macbeth* by heart, and can live in

the great poem by sympathy and imagination, it makes no difference when the poem was written, or by whom, and it is our duty to teach the boy that it makes no difference. We teach him just the opposite, by quizzing him in the dates of books and in the biographies of authors; we even tell him the immense fib that he will appreciate *Huckleberry Finn* better if he knows when it was written. If he has any mind at all, he can guess that we are wrong. The beauty of the Parthenon, of Niagara, of the moon, has nothing to do with dates or authorship.

Lately our sins in this sort of teaching have been aggravated by the fad for examinations in general and irrelevant information. These are usually called "psychological examinations," but certain cases of them are repudiated by competent psychologists. It is not always clear to the uninitiated just what kind of powers are revealed by correct answers to scattered questions, but the teacher of literature, if he employs such tests, is presumably hoping to check up the student's reading. Apparently he has no hope whatever that the reading will make any esthetic impression on the pupil. From one such examination paper, given recently in a reputable college, I quote the following stumbling blocks to Helicon:

1. Whose tuneful brethren all were dead?
   Who fired another Troy?
   Who still danced forward?
   Who trod the purple calmly?
   Who strove with none for none was worth his strife?

2. Place in context: (a) 9 bean rows, (b) 7 stars, (c) 4 Maries, (d) 144 green spectacles, (e) 2 stern faced men, (f) 25 leaders of revolts, (g) 2 bright and aged snakes, (h) 4 horns.
3. Name some works of literary importance written by:
   Confirmed drunkards.
   Confirmed drug addicts.
   Confirmed spendthrifts.
   Dissolute livers.
   Men who have spent more than a year in jail.

Literature as an experience in the soul is hard to examine on; like life itself, it can only be observed with sympathy. But if literature is an art, it can be studied in the principles of that art, and instruction in those principles should be the purpose of a course in literature. There is a delightful conceit among teachers that only in sheltered places, like schools and colleges, is there a searching interest in letters, but as a matter of fact the young writer often finds out that the principles of literature as an art are of living importance, only when he has left the academy and met the world. In the world men are excited to-day over the censorship of books, and they find, on discussing it, that they do not know what is decency in literature. There are few college or university courses which would answer the question, and just as few to tell them what literature is, what poetry is, what makes a book good or bad. Yet these are living questions, wherever men read at all, and they are questions of literature as an art.

In one branch of the curriculum we might finally look with some confidence for the artist's attitude toward literature—in those courses now common everywhere, which train mature students in writing poetry or novels or short stories. If the students there are not after art, what are they after? I fear that in most cases they are after money. A few of the younger ones have kindled to some vision of writing as an art, but the teacher would be an optimist indeed who could shut his eyes to the ambition of most of them to publish their work and get paid for it. It is aid of a practical kind they want—how to sell manuscripts. I remember such a course in the short story some years ago which was famous for the amount of money the students earned in the aggregate each term by the sale of their class exercises. The instructor had solved the psychology of editors as well as of the magazine public, and had contrived a teachable formula for pleasing both. Apparently it was a matter of less importance that no one mistook the successful stories for works of art.

The desire to make money is not necessarily bad; most of us have it. The teacher can not be blamed for the utilitarian and commercial pressure on literature as on other things in the world. But he need not yield to this pressure nor encourage it, and in strict honesty he ought to tell his pupils not to expect money from the pursuit of art. Why not go into business, which offers an honorable reward of a financial kind for talent and energy? Art has only an accidental

relation to money, and should have no other. I know that young poets grieve because they can not live on their verse. How awful if they could! Not even a competent poet expects to make from one volume enough to live on for a year, but if he could, he would have to publish a book a year to keep going. Suppose he began at twenty-five, a conservative date, and wrote till sixty-five—he would have produced the indecent number of forty volumes. If this is what the universities are to train up, they should list the instruction, not in the department of literature, but in the business school.

You may reply that writing is an art even though you write for money. In a sense, yes—as engineering in a sense is an art. Perhaps Ruskin has confused many an earnest English teacher by wiping out the old clear distinctions between useful and fine arts. He tried, for social and humane reasons, to define beauty in terms of usefulness. For him the proper ornament for a building was its own structure, and whatever served a good purpose was beautiful. As I write, my eye falls on some massive gas tanks, presumably constructed for a useful purpose, and as bare of meretricious ornament as Ruskin could wish. Yet I feel that they and art are hardly on speaking terms. I prefer the old definition, that the useful arts are our instruments in a world of action, and the fine arts are our expression in the world of contemplation. Through the useful arts we reach efficiency, through the fine arts we come at beauty. If literature is a fine

art its success can be measured in beauty, but not in money.

To an artist all this is triteness itself, but it is not yet an acceptable gospel in our education. When we begin to teach children to write, we do not ask them to write beautifully; enough if they write intelligently. When we teach them to read, we do not ask them to notice beauty in the book; enough if they can tell us "what the book is about." Later on, after they have gone to college, they can tell us what masterpieces have been produced by men who spent more than a year in jail.

4

If fine art is not the same as useful art, yet sometimes man rises, like Michael Angelo, from the practise of the useful craft to the higher expression of his spirit, and we cherish some hope that our teaching of literature may soon leave its preoccupation with utilitarian and financial ends, and become interested in art. If the teacher took the point of view of the creating artist, the advantage in pedagogy would be great, for we should have fewer and simpler text-books. Rules for writing are elaborate if theorists make them, simple if writers make them, for they put down only the rules that can be illustrated in practise. If we took the creative view of literature, and taught what the artist practises and nothing else, we could apply these few and tried principles as standards by which to judge writing, whether of to-day or a thousand years

ago. Our rules of punctuation would be fewer but entirely pertinent. Our rules for prosody would tell the truth about English blank verse—that nobody ever reads, or ever read, or ever wanted to read it with "five relentless accents to the line." Our grammar would look queer, but it would report correctly the purpose a writer has when he selects one construction instead of another.

To revise our text-books would not be hard; a greater difficulty may lie in our unconscious philosophy of life. Do we believe in art, anyway? Do we believe that life should be a finished performance, a control of the mind and character over the crude impulses of nature, that culture should be the most precious tradition, and that no past wisdom gained by men should be allowed to escape, but all of it should be handed on to our followers? Or do we prefer to trust nature, the impulse and the moment? The artist will always take the Greek view that sets nature over against art; since we try so hard to prove to ourselves that art should be natural, perhaps we are not artists. I confess I am troubled when a fine writer tells us that the poet should catch the cadence of the language spoken about him; I think of another age, when poets molded and even changed the cadence of the spoken language.

Whatever discouragement our philosophy may suggest to the artist, he renews his hope when he sees the splendid teaching that here and there the youngest children receive in competent elementary schools. All

the arts there are taught as art, even literature. If we are to improve the relation between the teaching and the practise of art, perhaps it is waste of time to bother with the present teachers and the present writers—they may be too old to save. But if these children who now write and paint and model and dance in the lower grades of our school system could be permitted to follow the same esthetic interests up to the high school, to the college, to the graduate course, we should soon have a study of literature from first to last which would see the art through the artist's eyes. That would be our desired Chapter Two. Later, and not too late, we might study the effect of books on the reader. That would be Chapter Three.

DO AMERICANS SPEAK ENGLISH?

XI

DO AMERICANS SPEAK ENGLISH?

In a sense, it is of little importance whether we do or not. Some of our neighbors like to say we do, but when we hear an Englishman speak he seems not to be an American. Yet we get the gist of what he says. Others try to convince us that we speak an American language, and they prove their case by citing all the words and phrases which some of us use and no Englishman uses, and by ignoring the far larger group of words and phrases which we and the Englishman use in common. Yet there are also expressions familiar to Englishmen and not to us; are they alone what constitutes the English language? In the United States as in England every large district or city has at least a few expressions not used elsewhere. It is a harmless but comparatively unilluminating pastime to study a language exclusively in its fringes, as Mr. Mencken likes to do; and a fine poet like William Barnes has the right, doubtless, to bury his talent in a dialect, if he wishes that kind of obscurity. Mr. John Weaver is going the same path through the local and personal slang which to him, when he writes, is the American language. But Mr. Mencken and Mr. Weaver do not,

I believe, talk the language they call American; they speak a very good—as we careless folk would say—English. It's the language we speak that counts, in life and in literature.

For the average person the important thing is to speak as well as he can the best language he and his hearers know. The philosophical person may also find it important to compare his speech with that of others presumably in the same tongue, to discover if his own usage might be improved. I assume that we Americans speak English, and I concede that we do not speak it as the English do, not even in those parts of our vocabulary which are common to both peoples. I should like to note some of the differences, and to ask what they mean.

Not the differences in words, I repeat. No two of us in New York, no two in London, use an identical vocabulary. Words, anyway, are the last things the civilized will attend to. Perhaps we ought to notice them, but we rarely do. When we are learning to talk, as babies in our own language or as adults in a foreign tongue, we have to work our way syllable by syllable, but when we have a mastery of speech we express ourselves and understand others largely through the tune, the accent, the rising and falling of the voice. When we call out a question to some one in another room, we can tell the answer if we can hear the tune of it; the words don't matter. How embarrassing it is to try our knowledge of a foreign language in the land where it belongs, and to discover

that the natives seem not to be saying any of the individual words we got out of the dictionary. Our impression is correct; the man who speaks his own tongue is talking less in words than in a tune. But since the tune can't be written down, we can't find it outside of the spoken word.

Though they use the same words, the Englishman and the American do not speak the same tune. Why they don't, I haven't the faintest idea. But again I am disposed not to worry about it. Though the English tune is pretty to my ear, it often brings the accent of the sentence into conflict with the logic of it, and in an ideal language I should think the accent and the logic would coincide. "Household," "housekeeper," "housewife"—in such classes of words the distinguishing part ought logically to be accented. In Greek—not a bad language—we should say "house*hold*," "house*keeper*," not "*house*hold," "*house*keeper." In so far as the American accent moves in a logical direction, we may be reconciled to our ignorance of the English tune. There is the same conflict between logic and tune in longer phrases, in whole sentences. When an Englishman wishes to give the effect of a strong negative, he emphasizes the positive element in the sentence. The Irish, who seem to the English illogical, emphasize the negative. "Is Mrs. Smith at home?" "She is *not*," says the Irish maid. "She isn't," says the English one. To the English ears the Irish tune, in that case, sounds abrupt, and it says not a negative but a discourtesy. I fear we

Americans shall always have some difficulty in understanding the English—not when they write, but when they speak; for many of the cadences which mean to them friendly solicitude are the very tunes which to us express superciliousness and contempt.

Coleridge pointed out that logic sometimes gets the better of an Englishman, when he is off his guard, and spoils his tune, and even makes a serious statement seem ridiculous. In church, he said in his *Table Talk,* he had often heard clergymen read the first chapters of Genesis with an intonation prompted by logic but giving the effect of incredulity. "And God said, let there be light. And there *was* light"—strange to say! The proper English tune would suppress the important verb, and emphasize the noun. "God said, let there be light. And there was *light.*"

If we have observed the strange effect that the English tune makes upon our ears, we can understand why some of the younger generation find it hard to appreciate the music of great English verse. As a matter of fact, they haven't heard it. They read their Tennyson or their Keats, their Byron or their Shelley, set to an American tune. It is not surprising, after all, that Shakespeare rarely fares well on our stage, since our actors and actresses, no matter how beautifully they pronounce his words (of course, not as he pronounced them), are almost completely at sea as to the larger melody of the verse. It is not surprising that thoughtful American poets should be consciously trying to write in the American tune, in the

shorter cadences most of us use. For that reason I've thought that the free-verse movement of a few years ago was chiefly important as disclosing our taste in speech, our positive, declarative sentences laid down line by line, our neglect of qualifying clauses, the monotony of our tune. For in the matter of the tune we have departed not only from the English but from our earlier selves. To my ears the tune of Walt Whitman, the long-phrased, varied, sinous tune, is the tune of Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address. The tune of Miss Lowell's verse seems to me the tune of Roosevelt's prose.

The first complaint I should make against our speech is that it is horribly monotonous—it hasn't tune enough. Perhaps you might say that the immigrant races other than English have mastered the words, but have wiped out the tune altogether. That theory doesn't account for the awful level on which the New England voice can move in its purest moment of tradition. Are we losing our ear? Is language for us an appeal only to the eye? After a century of silent drama on the films, shall we be able to hear anything? Our deafness shows in two chief ways: we have little ear for the tune, for rhythm, for cadence—and we have less than the average for words. Perhaps our failing sense of rhythm made us grateful to free verse. We first lose the sense of rhythm in line-ends and line-beginnings; there was no longer much point in printing the lines. Since the ear no longer was a sure guide to the phrase and the sentence, it was a blessing to have

those matters arranged for the eye, which still serves us.

If we have little sense of word-color, we may comfort ourselves; a sense for words is rare. Man uses words as mere counters or symbols; he also uses them for their own sake, as sounds of possible beauty. We might suppose that the word itself would come first, and the symbolic meaning afterward, but it seems to be the other way. In language as in the other arts it seems to be only the born artist who cares first for the medium. An interest in pure color would be one symptom of a gift for painting, but only the most cultivated public will care for a picture which is merely a harmony of colors. Only at the climax of their culture will people delight in beautiful sounds. When they pass that point, they are going down-hill. Whether we have passed that point, or have never reached it, at least we are not there at the moment. The ear rarely guides us to a correct pronunciation. In New York we say "*in*quiry" *and* "*va*gary"; if we are told that these words are "in*qui*ry" and "va*ga*ry," we try to change our habits, but we probably do not feel the greater beauty of the correct sounds. The children rebuke us here; they like good sounds—until we kill off their good taste. In my time I've committed that kind of murder, and remorse always assails me when I think of it.

Years ago I was correcting some freshmen themes, and George Edward Woodberry was sitting in my room. "Here's the worst essay I've ever read," I said.

"This boy hasn't an idea in his head. He simply makes loops of language." It was true enough—he had no ideas. But he had a genius for lovely sounds.

After a moment Mr. Woodberry said, "What mark did you give him?"

"I told him to rewrite the essay."

"Why?"

"Because he had no ideas."

"Oh, then the others whom you marked well all had ideas?"

I had to admit they had no ideas; few freshmen have. "But that florid language annoys me."

"I see," said Mr. Woodberry. "That boy has one symptom of a gift for writing—the others have none. If he will abandon his one gift, you will mark him high, as you have marked the others."

The production of good sounds is a physical matter, to be learned as soon as we are interested in it. When we Americans study singing, we learn to make the sounds in the right way, and we profit by the knowledge so long as we are singing. When we talk, we are as bad as ever. Perhaps. We are probably ashamed to make as pleasant sounds as we could, among our own people; they would miss the beauty and suspect a social pretension.

But perhaps this question of our speech, which seems to be a matter of the head, will be solved through our feet. We are devoted in this country to dancing, and through that art we may become sensitive to all the other arts. The question of speech is a question

of rhythm; good writing is a question of rhythm. If we attain complete sanity in our bodily life, no fear but we shall gradually come to a feeling for lovely speech. We may be encouraged by what is going on in the elementary schools, where our youngest children are taught to draw with rhythm, to model with rhythm, to sing, to dance and to act rhythmically. Those children speak rather better than we do; their virtues may creep up on us little by little, until we own a speech not to be mistaken for any one else's, a speech pleasant to listen to, full of fine sounds. Full of ideas, too, let us hope. But if not, there are many great ideas already in the world, and not nearly enough beauty.

IDLE YOUTH

XII

IDLE YOUTH

POPULAR discussion of youth and its behavior begins to die down. Our generation will soon be accustomed to youth. But even while it lasted, the discussion was inadequate and fruitless—it began and ended with the point of view of those who had not recently, if ever, been young. America for a hundred and fifty years has had the name of a young country, but while a country is in its youth, the inhabitants are likely to be prematurely old. So far as our history is concerned, the point is almost self-evident. The boyhood and so-called youth of our great men has usually been full of work and responsibility, such as belongs to middle age. In the families of immigrants, of those who have still their economic place to make, we can yet see the conditions which once were familiar in the average home—the children earning something whenever they have the chance, and the parents praising them for their industry, for their ability to contribute to the support of the house. Their help is needed, and their loyalty is admirable, but when they have made, as we say, a success of their lives, their years in retrospect will seem all alike. They will have missed

the kind of youth which we begin to value, now that the country is old.

The discussion of the young people from which we have just emerged, had to do with their wildness, their immorality, their general devilishness. These sulphurous themes interested their elders, and the subject seems to have been covered. There may be boys and girls who are wild, immoral and devilish, and still at large. A few of that kind fall into the hands of the law, now and then. But to be really bad, as to be really good, you must have a technique, and one may doubt whether inexperience can excel in either direction. The goodness of youth is only a promise, and the badness only a threat. From my own acquaintance with youth I should say it is very promising. I wonder if it ever promised so much, in our country. On the whole, it isn't wild. My own fear would be that it might prove as tame as its critics seemed to wish. It is sometimes unconventional, I should say, but for the most part moral. But I do think that American boys and girls are inclined to be idle. If the critics of youth had fastened on that charge, they might have made out a case. We could have explained the idleness, but the danger would have remained.

That is, we could have made another apology for idlers, with certain historic arguments which Stevenson did not employ. Our predecessors in the land were industrious; not to be industrious as they were, is to be idle. That's the criticism. And our youth, boys and girls alike, reply that they see little value now in that kind of industry. They have the same

kind of gratitude toward it that I find myself having toward the former owners of my farm, who picked the New England stones out of the fields and stacked them into walls. It had to be done, and I'm glad they did it, but I have my suspicion of any one who sees virtue in that colossal labor. Not virtue, but necessity. In that domain of industry I aspire to be idle.

So with most of the work done in this republic during its first century and a half. The remarkable fact about our sesquicentennial is the small amount of attention we are paying to it. Youth, it seems to me, is paying no attention at all. Why should it? The fathers of the country had great qualities in the work they were called to do; they picked the stones out of the fields, as it were. We have a different task, as youth instinctively knows. We should express our gratitude to the founders more cordially if we could do so with the understanding that they and their type of industry belong to the past. But we have reason to fear that any gratitude expressed would be interpreted as subscribing to more than we believe in. We think the founders were rather weak in some of the qualities we need. Like all great pioneers, they would be disappointing in settled society. We dare say this, with history to back us, though we know there have been historians always who thought society degenerated the moment it got beyond the pioneer stage.

I presume to speak for youth, in so far as I believe I have its point of view. If you happened to visit the exhibition in Philadelphia, no figure from the past probably recalled himself more often or more vitally than

Benjamin Franklin. Surely he was one of our great men —not simply industrious, ingenious and frugal, but courageous, in many directions imaginative, on many sides of human nature wise. That is, he was great in his own time. But to-day he would seem—he ought to seem—rather small, and I can understand why our young people see little in him to imitate. The really great men, who seem at home in every age—Michael Angelo, Leonardo, Pericles, Darwin, Pasteur—are the climax of a civilization, not the beginning of it. In spite of the moralists, the rude forefathers always have to miss a good deal, just because they are forefathers, and to set them up, them and their limited virtues, for youth to approve, is to deny progress in civilization and in culture. Franklin was a printer, one of the first important ones in our country. That is, he was important because he was among the first. Otherwise he was a bad printer, by any standards of the craft, early or modern. I'd be sorry for the youth who couldn't see the difference between Franklin and Caxton, or between Franklin and the best commercial printers to-day. Franklin left us an autobiography which is not without its interest, but I'd be sorry for the boy or girl who could read Emerson's journals, or Thoreau's, or Hawthorne's, or Lincoln's letters, or Whitman's prose jottings, and could then think that Franklin's autobiography disclosed for our day either a great mind or a great soul. If the boy or girl went outside our own literature for a comparison, there would be critics at hand to smile at our "young intellectuals." But many of our idle youth have some knowledge of

Montaigne's essays, or Marcus Aurelius and his *Meditations,* even of Dante's *Vita Nuova* and of St. Augustine's *Confessions.* Why try to fool them into thinking Franklin a great spirit?

If the elders often fear that youth lacks industry, the reply ought to be made that much of the industry on which American character has built up its fiber, looks now as relatively unimportant as Franklin's autobiography. Compared with the great works of mankind, it seems as tragic as a treadmill. It lacks imagination, and it lacks soul. I know George Herbert told us how to make drudgery divine, but I remember also that he was all his life a wealthy man, with servants to do the drudgery. To the American mind, the routine of the shop or the farm has to be done by a machine, and we would rather invent a machine than be one. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, if each younger generation protests louder than the last against routine which has apparently no meaning, and which is inspired by no vision. We may boast of scientific management, of our manufacturing in series, but in so far as the method reduces individual man once more to a mere machine, performing fragmentary operations interminably, youth will prefer not to be industrious. In school and college there are still teachers who ask youth to "learn its lessons"—that is, to absorb the assigned amount of mathematics or history or science, in the hope that later on the labor will justify itself. Youth prefers to know what it's about before the labor begins. How can we blame youth? We grown-ups would use the same caution, and call

it common sense, if our contemporaries tried to get a lot of work out of us by such a feeble inducement. The joke is on us. We belong still to the Franklin mentality. We are hardly above telling youth that "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, yealthy and wise." Youth looks around and sees the healthy, wealthy and wise farmers. We have often forgotten the reason for our own best actions, and when youth asks us why, we are thrown out. Every man who had the academic education used to study Greek literature. Why not, if you study any literature at all? It's incomparably the best in the Western World, and like other immortal things, it stays modern. But the classical tradition in America broke down when our youth asked why they should study Greek. Our answer finished it. We were as inspired as Franklin was when he rewrote the Lord's Prayer. We said that after years of Greek, in high school and college, there would be observed about us an aroma of indefinable culture. Youth knows that if old Cosimo de Medici had had no better reason for finding out what Plato said about life, the classics might not have had their renaissance.

What youth wants to do is to create. Of course the founders created. The pioneer who picked the stones out of the field, created a farm. But youth to-day, like youth in other ages, has an instinct for the future, and wishes to create the things proper to an advanced civilization. Even when they fail, or get off the track, their instinct is right. They are keen for science, because science has such a gorgeous fu-

ture. They are keen for art, but they want art to be new. Esthetically their theories are wabbly, but humanly they are sound. If they write poems, the verses may strike the well-read as imitative, but at least they will go under new names—they won't be called threnodies or odes. Those labels have been spoiled. Some one wrote a threnody to Mark Hanna. And didn't one of our founder poets, whom we ought to revere, write an ode to Benjamin Franklin, celebrating his musical skill on the mouth-organ?

No, our youth to-day wants to be creative, but it wishes the elders to understand that the creation is to be entirely in the world of the spirit, without the slightest taint of the world of industry. It is to be civilized creation, such as mankind has achieved in his high moments. I don't see why youth should not be honored for the ideal, and encouraged to try for it. Of course it is natural to smile when your son, for whom you have worked hard in your business, tells you he has risen above the commercial attitude—he's going to be an artist, or a scientist, or a philosopher—something nobly useful. What does he know of life? you say to yourself. But the question comes down to what the parent knows of life, and what he is willing to admit. He is the pioneer. He has founded his little country, his home. If he has succeeded, his boy ought to be more civilized than he, ought to live more in the things of the mind. What else is progress?

But the parent often does worse than smile. He sometimes disowns his son, as Shelley's father did.

Rarely is he so wise as Milton's father, or Browning's —successful men of affairs, who appreciated genius of another kind even when it occurred in their own family. With us the parental attitude, meant to be kindly and sensible, is often an unconscious confession. Son, we say, this idea of being a painter or a poet is all very well, but you haven't the equipment, neither the gift nor the training. The boy probably knows he hasn't the training, and why he hasn't—we are not competent to give it. I once heard a cheerful soul trying to discourage a boy from becoming a pianist. You're an American, he said, and you can't compete with the Poles. In Poland, whenever there isn't a revolution, every one practises the piano. Though the boy said nothing, I suspect he wished he had been born a Pole.

In fact, the one danger for youth and their brave ideals just now is that we who are still dragging our standards up from the pioneer stage can discourage them altogether too easily. The boys and girls are affectionate and kind; very few of them have the courage to follow an ideal to the point of hurting the family feelings. Ten years past the college age, you will find that most of the young people have compromised, and if you look into the cause, you will discover the relatives and the neighbors, and that old meanness in human nature which dislikes anybody different from ourselves. It isn't Franklin's virtues youth needs. He was after all a conventional man, as were most of the founders. Youth needs faith in its own vision, and love of its own life. I think it will get it, in spite of us.

THE HEART OF THE ADVENTURE

XIII

THE HEART OF THE ADVENTURE

MIDDLE-AGE is misunderstood. We have exaggerated the importance of youth, which comes to us inevitably and leaves us quickly, and in the sentimental endeavor to furnish that green period with significance, we have ascribed to it most of the opportunities which come only with mature years. We have fooled ourselves so long, that on our thirtieth birthday we have a premonition of the end, unconsciously give up our dreams, conserve our forces, and add ourselves to the resigned mediocrity of the world.

We have made ourselves believe, for example, that youth is the happiest part of life. We tell schoolchildren the awful fib that they will never be so happy again. We advise young lovers to prolong their engagement, since romance will never again be so bright. The children hear us with consternation, and the lovers wonder if they ought not to stop now, in the lull before the storm. But the tendency of youth to resist advice, which would be tragic if the advice were sound, turns out to be nature's way of saving them from us, temporarily at least. By the time they have reached middle-age themselves, they will unfortu-

nately imitate us in spreading wrong ideas about youth.

We convince ourselves that youth is the time to learn, that education is "completed" somewhere around the twentieth year. If at the age of forty we are embarrassed by some ignorance, we say we missed or neglected our "advantages" when we were young, or our elders forgot to instruct us. We never, never would think of learning anything more now. We are too old. It's a mercy we don't try to provide for our bodies as we do for our minds. We should have to purchase in the first twenty years all the clothes we ever expect to wear. The storage charges would be heavy, the styles would be out of date, and the things wouldn't fit, when we got around to them. But we do nothing so foolish. We know our bodies change. It is only our minds which become petrified before the Gorgon visage of middle-age.

Along with this doctrine, we hold that youth is the time for branching out, but in middle-age we should settle down. It's too late then to start anything. After thirty or thirty-five we ought to know just where we belong—our destined spot on the shelf in the cabinet of fossils. We say it in sweeter phrases; we say that by the end of youth we ought to be grounded and rooted in our life-work. Columbus, that is, should have remained a local pilot, Michael Angelo should never have painted the Sistine chapel, and Pasteur should have continued to manufacture wine and beer.

To prop up this theory, we say that youth is the

time for daring, youth has the spirit of initiative. This idea is fostered by the young themselves. It is natural for their thoughts to seem original with them. As the bulk of human experience mounts up, it takes more and more information to know what is new. The juvenile mind, at all ages, gets its biggest thrill in the discovery of things as old as the history it doesn't yet know. Whatever daring is needed for this process, nature supplies, but in other respects we are never so timid as in our early years. Why should it be otherwise? Life is a good deal to face, all at once.

The belief that youth is daring rests on a final dogma that youth is passionate. In the fresh unwearied body the emotions and instincts are strongest. They ought to be, if we are right in assuming that the passionate part of us, like the mind, soon becomes stationary, and gains nothing by practise. But if our faculties grow by use, it would be strange if the tide of passion flowed most violently in us just after we had acquired our second teeth, or while we were cultivating a tender mustache. Theory aside, youth wallows in sentiment, which at its thickest is only the nebular condition of love or hate.

It is misleading to say that passion actually distinguishes middle-age, for the result of our absurd theories of youth is that for most of us neither youth nor maturity is passionate. But only in middle-age is passion possible. It takes time and much practise to get your passions to white heat. Only a morbid, distorted mind like Byron's would praise first love—

that sappy, messy experience. The big sane poets, when they portrayed great love, always made it clear that the lovers had had long and careful training. Even Romeo had the habit of losing his heart, before he met Juliet, and she was already engaged. But they were young, you say. No, they had got through with youth early, and were mature. Some suspicion of the fact shows itself in our talk of the "dangerous age," around forty; the phrase usually refers to love, but the danger is really a wide one, that any kind of emotion may be getting exercised in us without our supervision, and may break loose just when we expected to make our will and select the family plot.

The truth is that only in middle-age can we be daring. In the good as well as in the bad sense. We may have tried to be shocking when we were young, but it never came off very well—we were but novices. The really wild things are done by the mature who have a taste that way, and who have had the patience to discipline themselves. Read your Ovid again, your Cellini or your Rousseau, and see how much character and intelligence, how much practise and study, go to make a ripe and masterly wildness. It's the same with the more honorable forms of initiative. When you are really mature, you know what remains undone in the world, you have scouted the unexplored regions, you have inventoried your tastes and your resources, you are ready to begin. The moment you say, "If I only had my life to live over again," you are ready, not to die, but really to live;

you have your chance at last. Wasn't it Cato who learned Greek after he was eighty? By our theory he ought to have put his waning energies into regret that he hadn't learned it at school. But his conclusion seems to have been that since he wished to know the language, there was no time to lose.

Of course there is good sense in the warning against a rolling stone; some forms of fresh activity in mature years may be no better than the restlessness of our youth. Yet it is only when we are well rooted in life that we can grow. Youth has little to branch out from. A healthy reading of human fate would see in any attained position a starting point for another development. It is none of our business how long we have to live—we must keep on growing as long as we can. Age at last will stop us, but the middle years are our rich period, the portion of our time most like the eternal opportunity our ideals crave. Any work well done then, opens to us new avenues and reveals new needs. Unless we are fatally bound by that false worship of youth, we shall enter the doors that open to us, and acquire at once whatever we lack for the new phase of our career. We can mend the gaps in our equipment all the easier if we are mature—if we are experienced enough to know what we want, and just what ignorance stands between us and our goal. The habit of readjustment and realignment to an unfolding life, produces just that flexibility of mind which we ascribe to the young, but which we observe in men and women who have lived long and well. Sometimes

we call it genius, but it is the kind of sense which ought to be common. We all practise it in crises, under compulsion—in war, for instance. If poisoned gas or the submarine menace us, we find the answer. We waste no time regretting that we didn't learn the formula in school—the choice is too obvious between discovering the proper defense or ceasing to live. That is one reason why war remains so diabolically fascinating, because under the threat of death man does live so fully, think so effectively, branch out so much. But the threat of intellectual and spiritual death is constant and just as real, though it seems safer to ignore. Our choice is to be daring, growing and creating in our mature years, or to be, in some essential ways, already dead.

Our system of education pays more deference to economic conditions and biological facts than to the needs of the mind. We send boys and girls to school and college not because they can do their best studying at that age, but because they are on our hands just then, and we don't know how to dispose of them otherwise. They are callow young things, and need leisure to get their physical growth. Nothing more leisurely has been invented than our schools and colleges. And certain simple things can be taught to the very immature. But beyond the elements, the use of which even a child can understand, the wisdom of the ages is temporarily thrown away on adolescents, who do not yet recognize the real problems of life, and therefore miss the importance of the solutions.

We have all read some famous books and found them dull, and later, on rereading, have discovered a meaning in them pertinent to our fuller experience. A living education must be somewhat like that. We can assimilate whatever answers the needs we are conscious of, and later we shall be ready to assimilate more. By the time we have reached maturity, our power to learn ought to be at its highest—our education should be in full swing. This is so in a broader sense than many of us dare believe. Whatever we really want to learn can be acquired better, more quickly and more soundly, when we are conscious of the need than while we are vague in experience, and at best are storing up information uncorrelated with life, in the hope that if we can remember it long enough, it may mean something to us.

I don't say that boys and girls shouldn't go to school and college. I should hate to have them, at that age, practising medicine or law on me, or managing the affairs of the nation. The point is rather that we grown-ups should, in some fashion, even more than they, be going to school. We should be busy mending the holes in our equipment, picking up the art or the science, the general information or the special training, the language or the mathematics, the history or the chemistry, which we need in order to be our complete selves. The best reason for thinking it is not too late, is that in nature's program for us, we could be ready no sooner. It is good augury for mankind that in so many places on the globe we begin to

be interested in adult education, not as though it were a scheme to make up the deficiency of early training, but recognizing in it rather the privilege of living man to learn as he grows.

To be our complete selves, to develop and use all our talents, to be in sound contact with all the life around us, is to be happy. How can youth be truly so? Youth has only its dreams. Middle-age may have some touch of reality, and at the same time the far richer dreams which only reality can inspire. Our minds are so framed that though we may have missed a complete life, there is something in us which is aware of the failure. Complacent middle-age is not permitted that ignorance which is bliss. No human tragedy equals the sense that we have missed our mark, or failed to find our proper niche. For most of us, perhaps for all, youth is somewhat perturbed by this dark possibility; we spend the supposedly radiant period of our existence wondering what it is all about, and asking whether we shall discover in time what side to take, what part to play. The more we wish to live, the more we worry. But the game begins to be clearer as we grow older, and nothing remains but to play it to the full. The sense that we are at last deep in it, that every part of us is at work, is happiness.

If we can judge by the example of men and women who have lived greatly, it is not youth but maturity which prolongs itself and annihilates old age. The body fails, but the spirit which has acquired the habit

of growth has caught the secret of eternity. Death would be awful if we met it with the conviction that we had never completely lived, never exhausted our possibilities. But a full and happy life consumes the occasions for regret as it goes along. Nothing is left over, to make us wish to go back. The end will be satisfaction—a rest, or one adventure more.

WALKING AND KNITTING

XIV

WALKING AND KNITTING

GIRLS, of course, should know how to walk. For decades—no, for centuries—young ladies have been urged to cultivate grace of carriage, a modest and seemly poise; perhaps our own grandmother practised slow steps with a light basket or other reminder on her head to acquire a sure but willow-like balance. Yet more than mere locomotion, however comely, is involved in walking, and always was. Walking is the attitude that discloses character. To move about and yet remain a constant personality with a fixed influence is possible only for natures somewhat shining and starlike; when, therefore, we would indicate such greatness in those we admire we picture them walking.

Consider the heroines of legend or fable. When Priam and the other old men of Troy were gathered on the tower by the gates of the city, it happened that Helen approached them. They were beyond the age for battle, Homer says, and presumably beyond a rash susceptibility to loveliness; as they exchanged war counsel in their thin voices they sounded like grasshoppers. But when Helen came walking the white heads turned upon her in silence and then whispered

one to another, "No wonder that Trojans and Greeks suffer many a long year for such a woman!" I like to imagine the incomparable stateliness, the mysterious swan motion, with which her beauty convinced them. How ineffective her coming would have been had she arrived throned insecurely in a sedan chair or shot thither like a missile in an automobile. Or, to cite another case, when Boaz saw Ruth and lost his heart to her, she was walking among the sheaves, in the attitude, that is, that disclosed her filial devotion as well as her beauty. Even that serious and discerning lover would scarcely have found out her charm had she been sitting still. Or, to illustrate still further, when Solomon entertained Balkis, Queen of Sheba, she walked. In my boyhood I owned a picture-book that showed the queen on her famous visit, sitting on a stiff throne side by side with the wise king, exchanging ideas in circumstances of obvious and awkward publicity. In later years I heard with relief that my book reported the incident incorrectly; the truth is that Solomon and Balkis went walking together. Not in the sedentary glare of the court but in their walks he discovered that she was beautiful, and she that he was wise. If another example is called for, think how Esther went into Ahasuerus at the risk of her life. That moment she walked her best. If she had seemed unqueenly as she moved toward his astonished gaze, would he have forgiven the presumption?

Good walking creates a charm so rare that men have always been reluctant to account for it by hy-

pothesis of merely human skill. Long ago the poets began to suspect that in such beauty there was something divine, and conversely that divinity, if it disclosed itself at all, loved to do so in walking. Vergil says that when Æneas came ashore at Carthage his mother, Venus, disguised as an Amazon, or huntress, waited for him on the strand. He failed to recognize her by her voice or by the counsel she gave, but when she turned to depart he knew her at once. *Vera incessu patuit dea.* Since we no longer read Latin, Dryden will translate the great lines for us:

In length of train descends her sweeping gown,
And by her graceful walk the queen of love is known.

Beauty no less divine made the same discovery of itself in the Middle Ages. When Dante met Beatrice and received the salutation that, as he said, opened up for him the utmost reaches of beatitude she was walking down the Florentine street with two other ladies only less young and less fair than herself. To the austere and vehement poet, watching that apparition of loveliness go by, the perfect motion quite as much as the heavenly smile announced his angel, the messenger with celestial tidings. Even in the eighteenth century a modern and very secular Beatrice, beloved by Henry Esmond, retained still this one high virtue in common with the blessed lady of Florence, that she moved with the rhythm of Paradise. She came down the old stairway to meet her lover, just home from Marlborough's wars, with a wax candle in her hand

lighting up her beautiful face and the scarlet ribbon she had put on for him; she came down "holding her dress with one fair rounded arm, and her taper before her." Poor Henry Esmond believed that he, too, was receiving the salutation of his angel. But why multiply instances? To get back to the root of the matter, Adam himself, if we may trust Milton's report, recognized thus the authentic beauty of Eve. The parent of us all, awakened from his momentous slumber, saw his new-created consort approach, led by her Heavenly Maker. "Grace was in all her steps," was Adam's comment. The lovers and poets since his time have found no more to say of woman at her best.

Knitting, like walking, serves an esthetic end as well as a practical, and it is in the esthetic service that it secretes its meaning. It is not enough to take stitches. However we might deplore the lack of that craft which clothes us, we should even more radically miss the pattern in the cloth, the beauty woven of the inexhaustible thread of life. Even at its lowest estate knitting is an instrument of feminine charm effective in the drawing-room or in other sedentary stages of society. Since the art is not practised now in its full scope, there are few living who can impart all the elaborate technique of it, and fewer still perhaps who would not smile at their own instructions, as if knitting were a humble or a frivolous pastime. But our grandmother would have spoken of the art with no diminished sense of its dignity; rather with a profound respect for this extra language, as it were, with

which to articulate, in the slow and confused spirit of man, a finer and more pointed sensibility. Let the knitting be of such a length, our grandmother would advise, as will reach to the floor when the knitter is seated—falling from the lap in smooth soft folds, with an additional six inches or so heaped on the carpet. So long the knitting must be, neither more nor less. Greater length suggests vulgar quantity, a blanket voluminousness; a scantier provision deprives the work of dignity and leaves it a mere dangling appendage. How tragically absurd, how improper for public inspection, are the first unballasted inches twitching on the needles. To maintain the just effect on successive evenings a wise knitter will unravel the piece as far back as good taste dictates. Did not Penelope each night undo what during the day she had woven, so that the robe she pretended to work on, a shroud for her still living father-in-law, might never be in excess? We are asked to believe that her methods had for object, not to attract her suitors, but to put them off. Yet who that has watched a fine woman knitting well will say that she did it to discourage admiration? Certainly Athena, who ought to have judged the case correctly since she herself was the great knitter among divinities, suspected at one time that Penelope dreamed of other plans than waiting for Odysseus to come home. As to the color of her weaving, Homer tells us nothing. Our grandmother would advise in general a piece of knitting to match the gown, or at least to harmonize with it. Yet a daring beauty might suc-

cessfully attempt strong contrasts, and the economical might be brought to them perforce; there is indeed something prodigal in a different knitting, like a different hair ribbon, for each gown. But whatever the color of the yarn, knitting must be practised at night to be most effective. It is the art of the lamp or the candle. Wool falling upon silken skirt is for the sensible eye a soft and smooth delight.

Such advice as this our grandmother would give if she were here now to teach knitting in its simplest uses as an instrument of fascination. But the art has meaning more profound even for those who practise it. It may well be a cure for nervousness, a training in repose. To be sure, it is often no such thing; in the hands of those who think only of the material result, the needles often jerk and thrust like the shuttles of an over-speeded loom. To their insistent irritation we close our eyes. But the knitter who practises the art for its esthetic fruits gains repose from the calm rhythms of finger, thread and ivory, all three moving fast enough to consume the surplus energy that makes it hard to sit entirely still, yet not so swiftly as to beget undue length in the evening product. And wherever conversation is still cultivated knitting is the loveliest of refuges if there be an awkward pause to fill or a sudden dilemma to think out or a question to postpone. The knitter becomes absorbed in a thread or a knot, or begins the ritual of counting stitches; and who dare say that the interruption at that very moment was not prescribed by the necessity of the craft?

Or if she does not interrupt her work, but continues simply knitting, how strongly intrenched she seems within her prerogatives. At times the most skilful knitter will use a technique more striking because more rare; she will let the work fall into her lap, the hands relax, the needles pause, and for no other purpose clearly than that her eyes, undiverted, may consider you. That is the climax, the supreme grace, of knitting. And when she has finished her remarks thus weightily emphasized, or has listened to yours, she will raise her work and bend her eyes to it again.

There is an inspiration too in knitting, as there is in walking, a breathing upon the spirit, as if a better wisdom than ours concerned itself with our fortunes. As long as we watch the moving needles and the growing fabric we are more susceptible to thoughts of other completed things—time, the thread of destiny, the web of experience. Thought and conversation were surely more vital and more serious when the spinning-wheel, the loom and the needle enacted daily before the entire household the solemn metaphors of life. The fates were women—or it was their knitting that made women seem to be fates. She who practises this art takes on even now the attitude and the mysterious prestige of those who direct our days for us. From that esthetic government no wise man desires to be free. Rather he will say of the ideal woman as Solomon said when from much observing he composed his famous definition, "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh with her hands."

But walking and knitting are more than accomplishments, however spiritual. As we watch them they disclose aptitudes for becoming, as it were, a language with which we may formulate profound questions of the human career. For example, walking may be a parable of man's posture in a world that he can not change. In such a world, to some extent, therefore, he must always seek those virtues proper to his situation, the defensive virtues of which walking is a metaphor. On the scene of an unchangeable world we must bring the apparition of invincible character. For walking we need poise, as we say, or—to call the wisdom by all its name—self-possession, self-respect, dignity, humility. Those are the virtues that oppose man to his environment, that predicate life as a background for his morals rather than as a laboratory for his imagination. It matters little whether the environment be happy, since walking calls always for the same virtues. There are those who must walk before an approving audience—who share something of Helen's loveliness, who will fascinate all eyes wherever they pass, who yet must possess themselves and keep out conceit. If for some of us life is but a happy dancing floor, then the prettiest child in the class, who has overheard her elders praising her looks, must cross the smooth surface under their gaze and take the pleasure of their admiration, yet none of the harm. There are those also who pass before a hostile audience, or at least before an unappreciative one. In that ordeal also good walking illustrates the defensive vir-

tues. For to come on the stage of life unwelcome induces naturally a special conceit; indeed, failure far more than applause is the forcing bed of egotism. In our success we pronounce that our environment was hopelessly rigid, even maliciously inhospitable; we kindle at the thought of what good walking we should have done through a kinder landscape. Or our failure may be even more tragic; in some momentous appeal to the heart of man on the issues of spiritual decency we may find ourselves thrice denied. Thereupon we deify ourselves. Nothing except stupidity surrounds us, we say; since we are in the minority, we are among the saviors; better be right with them, though rejected. Yet a truly great spirit, even granting that God is in the minority, may find himself in the minority without concluding that God has gained a partner; and a still greater spirit may accept the possibility of having made mistakes without parting with the integrity of the soul. They who really walk with God, we are told, walk humbly.

There are those also—like Childe Roland on his way to the dark tower—who walk well even though there is no audience, because their own character is with them. This metaphor of walking well where none sees us, the ancients employed to describe the persistent nobleness of the dead. The Hebrew psalmist spoke of walking through the valley of the shadow with Jehovah beside him, but to Virgil or to Homer the dead are lonely; their existence is even more fixed, less alterable, than this life at its worst; and what

can a ghost do except walk? If at any time the poet leads down some fabulous visitor from the sunlight, it is but to bring back word how the shades of the departed still move through shadows. Dido was wandering in the forest of Hades, and, though Æneas called to her, she continued on without change of countenance. In the Homeric Hades, Ajax would not pause to greet Odysseus, being sensitive still to the injury he had suffered when Achilles' armor was awarded to the chieftain of Ithaca. Achilles himself, when Odysseus told him of his son's renown, passed with happy strides through the meadow of asphodel. And through the field of red and yellow flowers Matilda was walking—she whose divine song Dante heard at the very end of Purgatory, on the threshold of Paradise. Eternal joy, like eternal sorrow, is a world unchangeable; out of either flame comes a voice of twofold meaning: "Day goes, night comes; tarry not here, but hasten on your way."

There are some parts of life, then, that we must leave as we find them; against this background our proper device is walking. But there are other sections of experience that we must not leave as we find them; there is a world that can and should be changed. In that world our duty is to knit. Knitting is the metaphor of triumphant intelligence, supplementing on the scene of life the apparition of invincible character. Where we can not knit we must be walking, but our first obligation is to knit if possible. The old image of the potter and his clay is for many of us the fa-

miliar language with which to indicate the creating virtues—imagination, resolution, persistence; but the image of the knitter is closer perhaps to the fact of life. Our thread of time is spun continuously, whether we tamper with it or leave it alone. It may tangle itself into knots, or it may break, or we may guide it into patterns of our own contrivance. In any case it is the only available object for the creating spirit to work upon, and it is a force rather than an object; it does not lie idle like the clay when we find no use for it, but rather works itself into a net to imprison us within our own indolence. Unless we direct it to the pattern of liberty, it becomes part of the rigid environment through which at best we can hope only to walk. When our unchangeable world is composed of fossils of neglected opportunity it shuts us in too closely even for walking.

A world to knit in and a world to walk through. This is all we have. We must learn only which is which.

THE END

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